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THE

RIFTER®

Your Guide to the Megaverse®



Inside this 96 page sourcebook...

Rifts® – A Techno-Wizard city

Splicers® – The final showdown with Legion

Heroes Unlimited™ – Mutants, madness and heroes

Palladium Fantasy RPG® – A city of mystery

Includes “official” source material

Coming Attractions, News, and More

Do you feel the tremors across the Megaverse®?

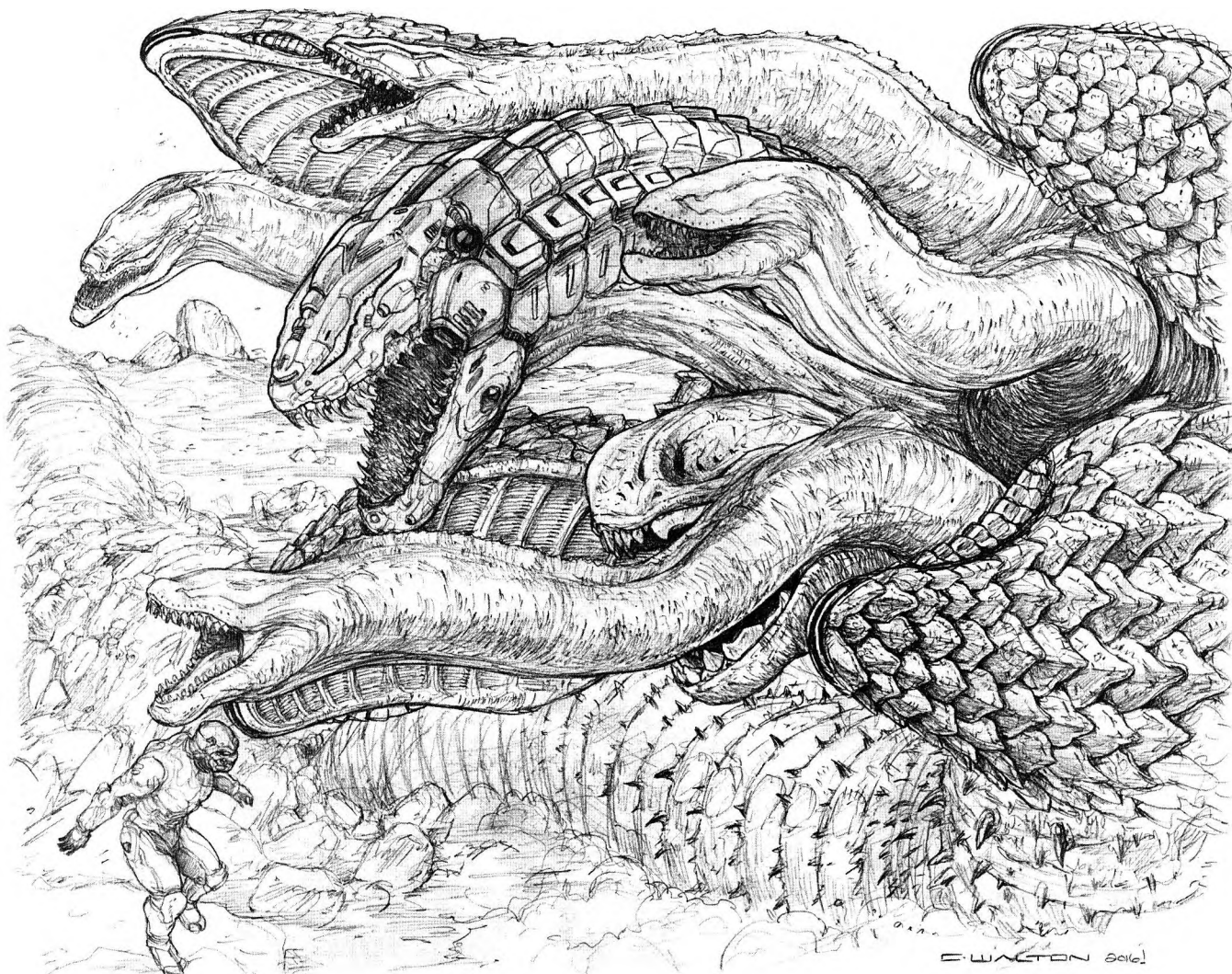
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Please note that none of us at Palladium Books® condone or encourage the occult, the practice of magic, the use of drugs, or violence.



The Rifter® Number 77

Your Guide to the Palladium Megaverse®!

Dedication

In memory of Randi Cartier, a dear friend, an unforgettable player and contributor to Palladium Fantasy. She may be gone too soon, but she is not forgotten. And to Roger.

– Kevin Siembieda, 2017

First Printing – March, 2017

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The slogan “A Megaverse of adventure – limited only by your imagination,” RPG Tactics, and titles and names such as Bizantium and the Northern Islands, Armageddon Unlimited, Aliens Unlimited, Arzno, Atorian Empire, ARCHIE-3, Beyond Arcanum, Beyond the Supernatural, BTS-2, Brodkil, Biomancy, Biomancer, Bio-Wizardry, ‘Burbs, ‘Borg, ‘Bot, Dimensional Outbreak, Dinosaur Swamp, Dyval, Elf-Dwarf War, Heroes Unlimited, I.S.P., Land of the Damned, Lazlo, Victor Lazlo, Lazlo Agency, Lazlo Society, Palladium of Desires, C.A.M.E.L.O.T., Chi-Town, CS, Coalition States, Cosmo-Knight, Crazy, Cyber-Knight, D-Bee, Dark Day, Dead Boy, Devil Worm, Doctor Feral, Dog Boy, Dog Pack, Dweomer, Emperor Prosek, Erin Tarn, Fadetown, Free Quebec, Gadgets Unlimited, Gargoyle Empire, Glitter Boy, Gramercy Island, Hardware Unlimited, Heroes of the Megaverse, Heroes Unlimited, HU2, Juicer, Khemennu, Ley Line Walker, M.D.C., Mechanoid Space, Mega-Damage, Mega-Hero, Megaversal, MercTown, Minion War, Moorcroft, Morphus, Mutant Underground, Mysteries of Magic, Merc Ops, Naruni, Naruni Enterprises, NEMA, Ninjas & Superspies, NGR, Northern Gun, The Nursery, P.P.E., Powers Unlimited, Psi-Stalker, Psyscape, SAMAS, S.D.C., Secrets of the Coalition States, Shifter, Siege on Tolkeen, Skelebot, Skraypers, Sorcerer’s Forge, Splugorth, Splynncryth, Splynn, Techno-Wizard, Temporal Magic, Temporal Wizard, The Disavowed, Three Galaxies, Tome Grotesque, Triax, Vampire Kingdoms, Warpath: Urban Jungle, Void Runners, Wilk’s, Wolfen, Wolfen Wars, Wormwood, Wulfen, Xiticix, and other names, titles, slogans, and the likenesses of characters are trademarks owned by Kevin Siembieda and Palladium Books Inc.

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Palladium Books® Presents:

THE RIFTER® #77

BRANDT -97

Sourcebook and Guide to the Palladium Megaverse®

Coordinator & Editor in Chief: **Wayne Smith**

Editor: **Alex Marciniszyn**

Contributing Writers:

Brett Caron
Lance Colley
Ian Herbert
Christopher Kluge
Kevin Siembieda
Todd Spencley
Charles Walton II

Proofreader: **Julius Rosenstein**

Cover Illustration: **Michael Leonard**

Interior Artists:

Nicholas Bradshaw
Kevin Long
Benjamin Rodriguez
Charles Walton II

Cover Logo Design: **Steve Edwards**

Credits Page Logo: **Niklas Brandt**

Typesetting & Layout: **Wayne Smith**

Art Direction: **Kevin Siembieda**

Based on the RPG rules, characters, concepts and Megaverse® created by **Kevin Siembieda**.

Special Thanks to Ian Herbert and all our contributing writers and artists this issue, and the hard working Palladium staff. Our apologies to anybody who may have gotten accidentally left out or their name misspelled.

– *Kevin Siembieda, 2017*

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Page 6 – From the Desk of Kevin Siembieda

Publisher Kevin Siembieda talks about the many books planned for 2017 release and the many already in some stage of production. He also talks about upcoming conventions, and *Carmen Bellaire's Rifts® Board Game* that has been getting developed over the last couple of years. Its Kickstarter launch is anticipated in April and Kevin is geeking out over it because it looks so good, and he's so happy for Carmen. Actually, all of us can hardly wait for this game. Very exciting.

Page 7 – Palladium News

A lot of exciting things are happening. Plans for **Robotech® RPG Tactics™** are picking up steam, and we are getting excited about **Robotech®** and a wide range of books coming from Palladium. Book titles not just for **Rifts®**, but for **Palladium Fantasy RPG®, Nightbane®,** and others. Not to mention products developed by third parties under license, like the **Rifts® for Savage Worlds®** game line hitting store shelves and the **Rifts® Board Game**. Read all about it here.

Page 9 – Coming Attractions

Books are coming. **Rifts® CS Heroes of Humanity Arsenal™, The Disavowed™, Rifts® Secrets of the Atlanteans™, Robotech® RPG Tactics™ Wave 2** and **Garden of the Gods™** (for the Palladium Fantasy RPG®) are just some of the titles being worked on as you read this. Plus we have added the **Nightbane® Dark Designs sourcebook** to the schedule and are already plotting *The Rifter® #78*. Can it be that product is finally getting pumped out? The answer is a resounding, yes!

Page 15 – The Rifter® Super-Subscription Offer

#232017 – Offer Ends March 20, 2017

The online offer happened throughout February, as always, but we don't want any of our loyal subscribers to miss out. We know some of you do not have Internet access and wait for this offer in the pages of **The Rifter®** to re-subscribe. Here it is. Offer #232017 ends March 20, 2017, for our subscribers. Do not miss out.

Page 16 – Nowhere

– *Optional Rifts® material, adaptable to other settings*

Brett Caron is back with a surprise. You know those other Pecos Empire towns described in a few previous issues of **The Rifter®**? They all tie together with Nowhere, a town built around ambition, questionable technology, Techno-Wizardry and some enterprising business people. Nowhere is much more than it seems. And while it offers hope and prosperity for an incredible future, dark forces and a touch of madness could turn this dream into a nightmare. Read and learn more.

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Artwork by *Benjamin Rodriguez*.

Page 39 – I am Legion, Episode Six

– *Official adventure & source material for Splicers®*

Chris Kluge, Lance Colley, and Charles Walton II present the climactic grand finale of the battle with Legion. Are your heroes up to the task? Find out as they take on Legion and the last of her minions. More adventure, surprises and horror await. Special thanks to *Jeff Ruiz* and *Todd Spencley* for their assistance and input.

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Page 60 – Weapon Systems

Artwork by *Charles Walton II*.

Page 63 – Khemennu™ – Wilderness Community

– *Optional adventure setting for*

Palladium Fantasy RPG® in the Old Kingdom

Ian Herbert presents a unique city of the gods – specifically the gods of Light and Dark, resting place of the legendary Sun Disc. Khemennu – also known as the City of the Eighteen Cosmic Gods – is a stronghold of the Church of Light and Dark.

A place where adventurers, mercenaries and holy men can find intrigue and work, if they know where to look. Part One of two.

Page 63 – A Brief History

Page 64 – Map of Khemennu

Page 64 – Overview

Page 66 – The Sun Disc

Page 68 – Population

Page 74 – The City Itself

Page 76 – Navigating the City

Page 79 – The Politics of Khemennu

Page 81 – Members of the Ruling Body

Artwork by *Kevin Long*. Yes, the Kevin Long of old. The art was done long ago for a Fantasy title that never saw the light of day. Figured it was time to use some of that artwork, enjoy.

Page 85 – Mutants on the Loose

– Official adventure source material for *Heroes Unlimited*[™] and *After the Bomb*[®]

Kevin Siembieda brings you up to speed with the machinations of the infamous Doctor Feral, complete with up to date stats and information. One of Doc Feral's underworld labs has had an incident. Dozens of intelligent mutant animals, monsters and nefarious superhumans have been set loose in the streets of Detroit (or wherever you'd like to place it). The events and characters set the stage for many possible adventures for your established heroes. Plus a pair of fun NPCs (or allow them as player characters) to spice things up and lead the player group on some rollicking adventures.

Page 85 – Who is Doctor Feral?

Page 88 – The Escape

Page 91 – Adventure Hooks

Page 93 – The Swarm

Page 94 – Devil Worm

Page 95 – Hopper

Page 96 – New Super Abilities.

Artwork by *Nicholas Bradshaw*.

The Theme for Issue 77

The theme of *The Rifter*[®] #77 is strange locations, the unexpected, heroes, monsters and adventure. The stuff of grand adventure.

The Rifter[®] Needs You

We need new writers and artists to fill the next few decades of *The Rifter*[®]. You do not need to be a professional writer to contribute to *The Rifter*[®]. This publication is like a "fanzine," written by fans for fans. A forum in which gamers just like *you* can submit articles, G.M. advice, player tips, house rules, adventures, new magic, new psionics, new super abilities, monsters,

villains, high-tech weapons, vehicles, power armor, short works of fiction and more. So think about writing up something short (even something as small as 4-6 pages). Newcomers and regular contributors are always welcome.

The Rifter[®] needs new material, especially when it comes to adventures and source material, for *all* of our game lines, particularly *Rifts*[®], *Chaos Earth*[®], *Palladium Fantasy RPG*[®], *Heroes Unlimited*[™], *Ninjas and Superspies*[™], *Beyond the Supernatural*[™], *Dead Reign*[®], *Splicers*[®] and *Nightbane*[®].

Pay is lousy, fame is dubious, but you get to share your ideas and adventures with fellow gamers and get four free copies to show to your friends and family.

The Cover

The cover is by *Michael Leonard* and depicts an adventurer group heading for the streets of Khemennu. But they represent any group of friends and heroes in search of new challenges.

Optional and Unofficial Rules & Source Material

Most of the material for this issue is "official" source material. As for optional source material, settings and adventures, if they sound cool or fun, use them. If they sound funky, too high-powered or inappropriate for your game, modify them or ignore them completely. We hope all of it ignites your imagination and inspires you to create your own wonders.

www.palladiumbooks.com – Palladium Online

The Rifter[®] #78

- *Rifts*[®] source material.
- *Palladium Fantasy RPG*[®] – *Khemennu Part Two* – by *Ian Herbert*.
- *Splicers*[®] – *I am Legion*[™] – *Aftermath* – ideas for continuing adventures, by *Charles Walton II*, *Chris Kluge* and *Lance Colley* – "official" source material.
- Source material for other RPG settings (tentative).
- News, coming attractions, product descriptions and more.
- 96 pages – \$13.95 retail – Cat. No. 178. Spring issue.

One game system, infinite possibilities

limited only by your imagination[™]

Do you feel the tremors across the Megaverse[®]?

From the Desk of Kevin Siembieda

Lot of Products and Planning

It feels like all we have been doing over the last month since I wrote *From the Desk* for **The Rifter**® #76 is planning and working on product releases and convention prep. And yes, it has only been a month instead of three, since the last issue of **The Rifter**®, because we are working hard to get **The Rifter**® back on schedule as well as a lot of other products. You are holding **The Rifter**® #77 in your hands, and **The Rifter**® #78 should be coming to you in May. Meanwhile, we have been hard at work on everything from **Robotech**® to **Garden of the Gods (Palladium Fantasy)**, a bunch of **Rifts**® titles (**HoH CS Arsenal**, **Secrets of the Atlanteans**, **The Disavowed**), and a whole lot of other things. You will see a **Nightbane**® sourcebook as well as a **Dead Reign**® sourcebook added to the schedule. The former is, in fact, available now as a Raw Preview Edition, limited to 150 copies while supplies last. The actual book should hit store shelves in June.

Convention season is already starting, and we have been making plans for **CoastCon 40**, **AdeptiCon**®, **Gen Con**® and other events. In addition to attending a handful of conventions in person, Palladium Books supports dozens of other conventions, and its **Megaversal Ambassadors** who run gaming events, with prints and swag to give away to the best players (sometimes to all participants).

There is a lot of early planning and commitments necessary for attending conventions, including any games you may be running or panel talks. My first convention of 2017 will be **Coast-Con 40** in Biloxi, Mississippi, March 4-6. I accepted the invitation last year because the show runners seem nice, I have never been to Mississippi, and my old friend and lead writer for *Rifts*® *Savage Worlds*, *Sean Patrick Fannon* will be there. I expect to be on a number of panel talks and run a couple of *Lord DeSilca* fantasy games as well as generally try to be available to chat with fans and sign books. By the time you read this, I expect to be back from the event and have had a nice time.

Books and games are a comin'. Otherwise, we have all pounding away on several games and sourcebooks. And I mean, pounding hard and fast to deliver you a plethora of new books. I have been coordinating and working on the writing, editing, and scheduling as well as assigning work to artists, writers, and others. Work is flowing nicely and we are burning hot with ideas. I have even done some work on **BTS Tomes Grotesque**, one of the long awaited sourcebooks for the **Beyond the Supernatural**™ RPG. In fact, I may drop a BTS monster inside the pages of upcoming issues of **The Rifter**® from time to time so you can see what I have in mind as I work on it. Don't get too excited, this title is probably a year away from release.

Robotech® **RPG Tactics Wave Two**, and all things **Robotech**®, is one of our biggest, most demanding projects as we look toward getting Wave Two into manufacturing as well as releasing additional support for the game line.

Carmen Bellaire's Rifts® **Board Game** is another important and exciting release that Palladium is involved with as the licen-

sor. As you may already know, we licensed the rights to make a **Rifts**® **Board Game** to long-time freelance writer and game designer, Carmen Bellaire quite a while ago. It was one of the secret things going on behind the scenes. In fact, he has been quietly working on it for something like two years now, maybe longer. For Palladium that means approving the digital sculpts for game pieces (all highly detailed and quality miniatures), the artwork, design elements and the game itself. And let me tell you we are loving what we are seeing as Carmen gets closer to launching his Kickstarter to manufacture the game. **The Rifts**® **Board Game Kickstarter** looks like it will launch in the *middle or end of April, 2017*. Watch for it! More on this game in **News and Coming Attractions**.

If it sounds like I'm going a little gaga over the **Rifts**® **Board Game** it's because I am. In part because all the guys at **Rogue Heroes, LLC** are doing a great job on every aspect of the game, and because it is exciting to see your creations adapted to a new medium. I think people sometimes forget that even professional writers and game designers are *big fan boys*. So it is always thrilling – at least for me – to see your creations from an RPG translated and brought to life in a new medium. I was excited about *Rifts*® for *Savage Worlds*, but it was another RPG. Books. I know books. But the **Rifts**® **Board Game** is something new and different. A new type of game where the characters are gorgeous 32mm miniatures – bold, powerful and highly detailed. It is also exciting that the **Rifts**® setting and iconic characters are being brought into a new medium. Carmen and his creative people have been a dream to work with and the game is looking so cool. Sorry, it's very exciting. I'll go bonkers if they ever make the **Rifts**® movie or adapt one of our game IPs to television. Which I sure hope happens sometime soon!

Yes, Palladium has done pewter miniatures, with 30+ of them still available from us right now. I love some of those minis, especially the Glitter Boy, SAMAS, Sky Cycles, Skelebots and Dog Boys, but they were first released something like 20 years ago. These new sculpts, poses and detail, as well as the new sculpting and manufacturing processes, are so different, and the detail ... wow. The new miniatures for the **Rifts**® **Board Game** look amazing. Wait till you see 'em all in the Kickstarter! (Middle or late April, 2017.)

As I write this, it is **Valentine's Day**, so let me just say, I love and appreciate you, our fans. And of course, the wonderful Palladium staff and our freelance writers and artists. I hope your Valentine's Day and every day is filled with love, joy and wonder. Game on and keep those imaginations burning bright.

– Kevin Siembieda, *Inspired Writer, Artist, Game Designer*

Palladium News

By Kevin Siembieda, the guy who should know

Books, Books and More Books

Our goal this year is to put 10-15 new products in your hands, starting by getting current with **The Rifter®**. As a subscriber you should have gotten **The Rifter® #76** something like 3-4 weeks ago, and now you have **The Rifter® #77** in your hands. **The Rifter® #78** will follow in May.

Meanwhile, we are working away on getting the next three **Rifts®** titles done and to you over the next three months (**Rifts® CS Arsenal™**, **The Disavowed™**, **Rifts® Secrets of the Atlanteans™**) along with **Garden of the Gods™** for Palladium Fantasy. What's that? You want more? Okay how about new sourcebooks for **Nightbane®**, **Dead Reign®**, **Robotech®**, **more Palladium Fantasy RPG®**, **Splicers®** and **Rifts®**, among others? Keep your eyes peeled, because they are coming. And so are some **Rifts®** products being produced by other companies under license. Most immediately Pinnacle with **Rifts® for Savage Worlds**, and the **Rifts® Board Game** coming from Carmen Bellaire and Rogue Heroes LLC. Recently I have approved all kinds of art and 3D sculpts for miniatures going into the **Rifts® Board Game** as Carmen and company get closer to wrapping up design elements in preparation for his Kickstarter launch coming this April.

Palladium Podcast

– Secrets of the Megaverse®

We have been so swamped with work that we haven't even had time to figure out the equipment to get started. But the Palladium podcast is coming soon. We intended to make it a weekly podcast with *Kevin Siembieda* and *Charles Walton II*. It may start the end of February or sometime in March. Tentative title is **Secrets of the Megaverse®** and will be devoted to the art of running and playing RPGs, role-playing game design, creating and running adventures, all things RPG, and the history of Palladium Books. Keep an ear out for it.

Get the Rifter®

We are working to make **The Rifter®** better than ever, with more official source material and fun for ALL our games. Don't forget, readers of **The Rifter®** can place a **Rifter® Super-Subscription offer** order up till March 20, 2017. As long as it is postmarked March 20, or before, we will honor it. You get **The Rifter®** delivered right to your doorstep and get a *free gift* (if you want one) on top of it all. See the description elsewhere in this issue or on the Palladium website. This offer only comes once a year. And as many of you know, **The Rifter®** has been better than ever with an increasing amount of "official" source material most issues. Remember, **Rifter®** material can usually be cannibalized and adapted to *any* world setting, not just the one it was specifically written for.

Rifts® for Savage Worlds® Game Line

By the time you read this, the **Rifts®** for **Savage Worlds** initial wave of releases should be on store shelves. Check 'em out. They are the **Savage Worlds® Rifts® Player's Handbook**, **Game Master Handbook**, **Savage Foes of North America**, **Game Shield** and three map packages. It is my understanding that the Pinnacle creative team is already plotting new sourcebooks.

Rifts® Board Game from Rogue Heroes™

Carmen Bellaire and the

Rifts® Board Game by Rogue Heroes™ LLC

I wrote this for an online Weekly Update, but thought I'd include it here too. Some of you might be wondering why Palladium licensed the rights to a **Rifts® Board Game** to *Carmen Bellaire*. That's an easy question to answer. First, Carmen is a friend, as well as a talented freelancer who has written a number of top selling products for us. **Splicers®** and the **Powers Unlimited®** books immediately come to mind. Second, creating a **Rifts® Board Game** is one of his dream projects. Third, Carmen has wanted to start his own game company, *Rogue Heroes™ LLC*, for years, and I love helping fellow creators realize their dreams. Finally, what many people do not realize is that Carmen is a genius at game design. I mean, an *Erick Wujcik* level, game design genius who has done brilliant work for **Upper Deck** and others, as well as Palladium Books. So when Carmen approached me some years ago to pitch his idea for a **Rifts® Board Game**, and asked for the license, I jumped at the opportunity. It was a good choice, because he has spent the last two years making the game, and it looks great.

Palladium has been talking about and softly advertising the **Rifts® Board Game** from **Rogue Heroes LLC**, because we have the means to do so and to spread the word about the game to the potential core market: *Rifts® fans!* I want Carmen to succeed because he is my friend and a good person, not just because this license will generate some third party income for Palladium Books®. I'm also behind it 100% because it is damn good. It captures the look and feel of **Rifts®** that fans are going to love. So I hope you too will spread the word and support this venture, starting with the Kickstarter that Carmen plans to launch by the end of April, 2017. This is a passion project from a game designer who loves the **Rifts®** characters and settings, and who knows how to bring them to life in a new medium.

For those of you who find it increasingly difficult to find time for a 3-5 hour role-playing experience, the **Rifts® Board Game** enables you to enjoy **Rifts®** action whenever you have a spare 60-90 minutes with a few friends! And it is gorgeous. The lead sculptor is amazing; heck, all the sculptors Carmen has hired are doing beautiful work. He has had them toiling away making masterful 3D sculpts for the last year and a half, maybe longer. The artwork is mostly by freelance artists you will know from Palladium publications: *Amy L. Ashbaugh*, *Charles Walton*, *John Zeleznik* and others, and they are knocking it out of the park, too.

Palladium Books completely approves, supports and endorses this wonderful game, but it is **100% Carmen Bellaire's baby**. It is his ideas, his rules, his designs, and his vision of **Rifts®**

brought to life as a *board game*. A game with exquisite 32mm game pieces suitable for use in your *role-playing games* or sitting on your shelf, as well as for the board game itself. *It is also being made at Carmen's cost*. I'm a bit nervous for him, because he has sunken a boatload of his own money and time into his **Rifts® Board Game** already, as well as his heart and soul. The future of *Rogue Heroes LLC* – and when you get right down to it, his family – rests on the success of this game. Success or failure, it all rests on Carmen's shoulders. So yeah, I'm going to hype it up as much as I can for him, because I know the stakes and I know how awesome this game is.

I'm happy to say Carmen has made it easy for me to endorse by creating a game I believe in, and every Rifts® fan will love to own! The game is beautiful, fun to play, and screams **Rifts®**.

Check out Carmen's Facebook page for regular updates and information: <http://www.facebook.com/RogueHeroesPublishing/>

It is all very exciting and we are rooting him on. I think the end results are going to blow people away. Please support his Kickstarter launch by telling all your gaming friends and posting, tweeting and talking about this game everywhere. Carmen (and we) thank you.

Robotech® RPG Tactics™ Update

I know it has taken a very long time to fulfill this Kickstarter, and for that I am very sorry. More sorry than some of you may be able to imagine. But we are dedicated to getting Wave 2 done and in your hands by the end of 2017. Not only that, but we want to make it amazing. Our Kickstarter backers and fans have waited so long for **RRT Wave 2**, that if we can make improvements we want to do so. We have been frustrated by many aspects of production that clash with what we know would make a superior product. Moreover, we want to offer organized play support, scenario books, and the next several Waves of RRT products. We have never given up on our dream to make **Robotech® RPG Tactics™** amazing.

We are working on something exciting right now that, if it pans out, could change everything and help us bring you **RRT Wave Two** by the end of 2017. We want to bring **Robotech®** to life on the tabletop like never before, and we are working hard to make this happen.

We have not released details these many months because everything has been in motion, and still is. There have been times when we thought we had firm plans for moving forward, only to have something occur to change them – good or bad. Case in point, we had pretty much resigned ourselves to being unable to significantly lower the part count in the RRT game pieces. However, we are suddenly readdressing that as we explore new possibilities that have surfaced. In fact, I have spent most of the week on this very matter. We are working on all of this with the desire to bring you something great, not just crap it out to be done with it. We have big dreams for **Robotech®** on several fronts, and are trying to make them all happen. To that end we have had many positive and exciting conversations with *Harmony Gold* and other interested parties. I know it is a lot to ask, but please hang in there with us. We think we have something truly fun brewing.

On a smaller scale, *Harmony Gold* has approved our proposal and art concepts for the first **RRT Scenario Book** and our plans for the **Ghost Fleet Saga™** series.

The **RRT Macross® Saga Scenario Book One** will present mission scenarios based on the first half of the *Robotech® Macross® Saga* era of the television show. That means many missions and battles that are part of the iconic events, characters and story of the *Robotech® Macross® Saga*. **RRT Macross® Saga Scenario Book Two** is already in development and will provide all the remaining chapters of the *Robotech® Macross® Saga*.

The Ghost Fleet Saga™ is expected to be a series of RPG adventure sourcebooks that will create new **Robotech® RPG** and **RRT** factions and settings to game in. The time period is the decade between the UEEF's departure from Earth and their return in New Generation. This means the setting incorporates the mecha of several *Robotech®* eras (The *Macross® Saga*, The *Masters Saga*, *New Generation* and the beginnings of *Shadow technology*). The UEEF uses the new (and dangerous) *Shadow technology* in covert operations against the Regent and his *Invid* and *Inorganics*, as well as space pirates and renegade *Zentraedi*. This series will offer a wide range of stories, new mecha and adventures in space and on alien worlds.

If you are a Kickstarter backer who needs to change/update your address in BackerKit, please send us a message through Kickstarter, or an email to kickstarter@palladiumbooks.com, and we'll take care of it. A lot of people have been submitting address changes. Excellent! Please, keep those address changes coming in. Thank you.

AdeptiCon – March 24-26, 2017

Chicago Area – www.adepticon.org

The Palladium crew will be at **AdeptiCon** again this year. Hopefully with some news and details about **Robotech® RPG Tactics™** and *Rogue Heroes' Rifts® Board Game*. Stop by the booth to get the latest and pick up on some product.

Gen Con Game Masters Wanted

To guarantee a dedicated gaming area and listing in the program book and online schedule, we need your descriptions and details over the next few weeks. Please start sending them in to NMI. Any Megaversal Ambassador can help you, but NMI is the primary Gen Con event coordinator. We had some awesome events the last few years, so let us, please, keep the trend going. Remember, G.M.s running Palladium events get a discount coupon for EACH game they run that they can redeem at the Palladium booth. We are looking for Game Masters to run any and all Palladium game settings: **Rifts®, Robotech®, Robotech® RPG Tactics™, Palladium Fantasy®, Heroes Unlimited™, Splinters®, Nightbane®, Dead Reign®, Beyond the Supernatural™** and all the rest! We appreciate ALL of you, and love that you run games for us at Gen Con. Thank you. Contact us at 734-721-2903 or via the Megaversal Ambassadors.

Coming Attractions

Palladium's 2016 Release Checklist

Available Now

- **New! Nightbane® Dark Design sourcebook "Raw" Preview Edition**
- **New! The Rifter® #77 – Winter issue** – 96 pages.
- **The Rifter® #76 – Fall issue** – 96 pages.
- **The Rifter® #75 – Summer issue** – 96 pages.
- **Hell Followed™, a Dead Reign® Sourcebook** – 160 pages.
- **Weapons, Armor & Castles of the Orient™** – 48 page, comic book size format.
- **Robotech® The Masters Saga™** – New 8½ x 11 format, 160 pages.
- **Rifts® Coalition States: Heroes of Humanity™**

Coming Soon 2017

- **The Rifter® #78 – Spring issue** – 96 pages – April/May, in production.
- **Rifts® Heroes of Humanity™ ARSENAL** – 96 or 128 pages – March, in final production right now.
- **Rifts® Secrets of the Atlanteans™** – 192 pages – March/April, in production now.
- **Garden of the Gods™, a Palladium Fantasy RPG® Sourcebook by Kevin Siembieda** – April/May, 2017.
- **Rifts® The Disavowed™ Sourcebook by Kevin Siembieda and Matthew Clements**. April/May.
- **Nightbane® Dark Designs Sourcebook by Mark Oberle**. June.
- **Dead Reign® Sourcebook: In the Face of Death** – Summer.
- **Others** – we may try to slip in a few small books before summer.

Coming Later in 2017 and 2018

- **Lopan™, a Palladium Fantasy RPG® Adventure Sourcebook**
- **Lopanic Games™, a Palladium Fantasy RPG® Sourcebook**
- **Robotech® RPG: Ghost Fleet Saga™ Sourcebook**
- **Robotech® RPG Tactics™ Wave 2 expansion packs**
- **Robotech® RPG Tactics™ Scenario Book One and events.**
- **Rifts® Sovietski™ World Book**
- **Rifts® Haunted Tech™ sourcebook** – Rescheduled
- **Chaos Earth® First Responders**
- **Splicers® Sourcebooks**
- **Heroes Unlimited™ Sourcebooks**
- **Nightbane® Sourcebook**
- **Beyond the Supernatural™ Sourcebooks**
- **Rifts® World Books and Sourcebooks, including Rifts® New Navy, Rifts® Antarctica, and others.**
- **And some big surprises coming this summer and fall.**

Palladium RPGs are available in many hobby and game stores around the world. We encourage people to support their local stores. Going to a store enables you to see the product before purchasing it, and many stores are happy to place special orders for you, provided you pay in advance, enabling you to avoid the cost of shipping and possible damage in the mail.

Ordering from Palladium Books: You can also order directly from Palladium Books, but you will pay extra for shipping. For customers with access to a computer, we highly recommend ordering online. This provides you with information about the most recent releases and Palladium's entire product catalog. It also provides you the most accurate shipping costs and more shipping options. You can also order by telephone; 734-721-2903 (order line only). For customers without such access, use the following "mail order" process.

1. Send the cost of the books or items being ordered.

2. **In the USA:** Add \$6 for orders totaling \$1-\$50 to cover shipping and handling. Add \$12 for orders totaling \$51-\$95. Add \$18 for orders totaling \$96-\$200. **Note:** For *non-book products*, including the **Robotech® RPG Tactics™** box game and expansion packs, add an extra \$6 per \$50 worth of product, on top of the shipping amounts listed above. This is because *non-book products* cannot ship via Media Mail, and must use a more expensive method of shipping. **Outside the USA:** Double the shipping amount for orders going to Canada, and *quadruple* it for overseas orders. Any and all additional costs incurred as a result of customs fees and taxes are the responsibility of the foreign customer, NOT Palladium Books.

3. Make checks or money orders payable to *Palladium Books*.

4. Please make sure to send us your complete and correct address, *including* apartment number. **Note:** These costs are for the least expensive and slowest method of shipping only. Allow 2-4 weeks for delivery. Order online or call the office for a superior but more costly shipping method.

New! Nightbane® Dark Designs Sourcebook

– Raw Preview Limited Edition – available now

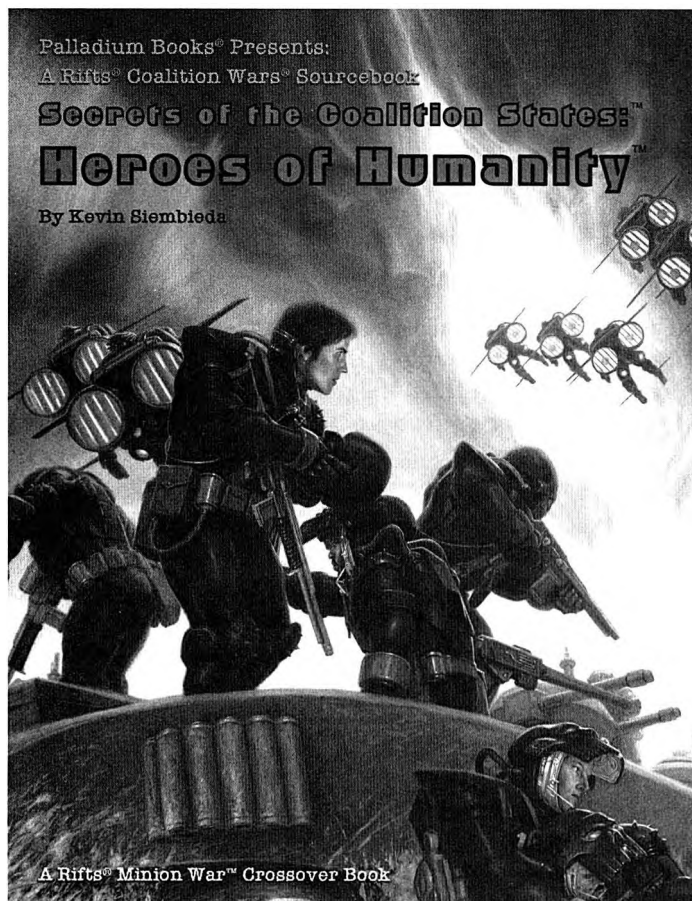
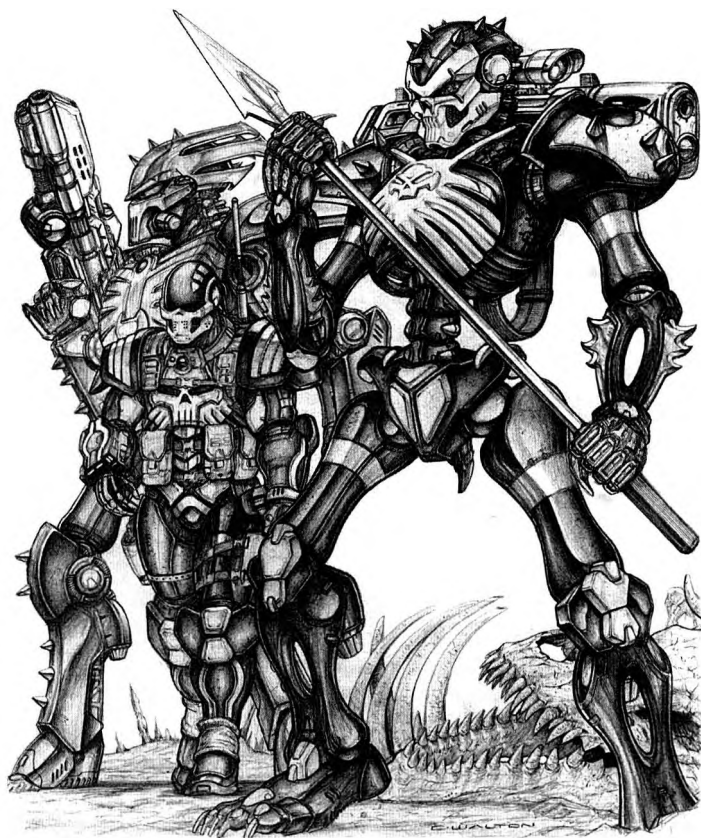
The **Raw Preview Edition of Nightbane® Dark Designs™** is an advance copy of the *unedited, unillustrated, final working manuscript* for this exciting new sourcebook. You get to see the unfinished book months before the final title is released. A rare look at the *raw manuscript* before publication. Limited to a total of 150 copies.

Nightbane® Dark Designs is a guide to creating the Nightbane®, and a sourcebook for *players* and *Game Masters* alike. It presents all sorts of new Nightbane creation tables, new Morphus tables, new Talents, and new information. Info and powers that enable players to make memorable Nightbane characters and for G.M.s to take their games up a notch.

Note: The finished **Nightbane® Dark Designs™** sourcebook is anticipated to ship in June of this year. But you can start playing right now with this special edition!

- **Limited collector's edition – only 150 total copies made!**
- **Sold on a first come, first served basis, while supplies last.**
- **A rare glimpse at the virgin manuscript and a work in progress.**
- **18 New and comprehensive Morphus Tables.**
- **60 New Talents.**
- **40 New Elite Talents.**
- **Talent creation and conversion steps.**
- **The Ancient Nightbane R.C.C. fully statted out.**
- **Answers to some common questions and more.**
- **Written by Mark Oberle.**

- \$20 – 96 pages – Cat. No. 736-RAW – available now, while supplies last. Do not miss out. The finished book is expected to ship in June.



COMING!

Heroes of Humanity™ Arsenal

Rifts® Secrets of the Coalition States™ Sourcebook

Rifts® Heroes of Humanity gave you updated Coalition Army O.C.C.s, ways to upgrade men-at-arms, new O.C.C.s, battle plans and strategies and tactics. **CS Heroes of Humanity™ Arsenal** provides an array of new Coalition hardware: weapons, armor, additional SAMAS, other power armor, robots, combat vehicles, gear and info.

- New CS weapons and gear, like the Glitter Boy Boom Tank.
- New CS SAMAS and power armor.
- New CS robots and combat vehicles.
- More secrets and information about the Coalition States.
- Wild adventure opportunities, fun and more.
- Part of the *Minion War™* “Crossover” series.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda, Clements, Gleba and others.
- 96 pages – \$16.95 retail – Cat. No. 893. March 2017.

Rifts® Heroes of Humanity™

Secrets of the Coalition States™ – Available now

Rifts® CS Heroes of Humanity™ and HoH CS Arsenal™ are companion books. Both titles, along with **The Disavowed™**, and **Rifts® World Book: Megaverse in Flames™**, changes the landscape of Rifts North America and are laying the groundwork for something big.

Rifts® CS Heroes of Humanity™ presents ways to upgrade and improve existing Men-At-Arms characters with Advanced Training and includes new character classes, weapons, equipment, alliances and conflict to inspire epic new adventures. *The Minion War™* has spilled onto Rifts Earth. At the epicenter of the invasion is *North America*.

For the first time in history, the Coalition States, Northern Gun, the Manistique Imperium, Lazlo, New Lazlo, Free Quebec, the Cyber-Knights, Lemurians, True Atlanteans, D-Bees, mages, mercs and many, many others stand together against a common enemy. Meanwhile, *the Splugorth of Atlantis*, *Archie Three*, *the Republicans* and *the Vanguard* engage in their own shadow war against the invading demon hordes, and each other.

- **Heroes of Humanity™** lets unprecedented types of characters gather in mixed groups that would otherwise be ideologically opposed. Together they fight side-by-side for the greater good.
- New ways to upgrade your existing Men-at-Arms characters.
- Coalition Demon Hunter school and advanced training programs.
- New Coalition O.C.C.s like the Death Knight and Skelebot Specialist.
- Coalition military O.C.C.s expanded such as the CS Juicer and more.
- New CS gear such as the Hellbuster and Falcon Death Wing.
- CS battle plans, world information and many adventure ideas.
- The strategies and tactics of the demons and the CS.
- Summary of Demon and Deevil vulnerabilities.

- One Xiticix battle plan and who really pays the price.
- Plenty of guidelines, tables and rules to help you run it all.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda, Gleba, Clements and others.
- 160 pages – \$20.95 retail – Cat. No. 889. Available now!



Rifts® Board Game Kickstarter

Mid- or Late April, from Rogue Heroes, LLC

The Rifts® Board Game is nothing short of awesome. It is the brainchild of experienced game designer *Carmen Bellaire*, and will be launched first as a *Kickstarter in the middle or end of April, 2017*, from Carmen's game company **Rogue Heroes, LLC**.

We had a six hour meeting with Carmen on Saturday, February 11, and have now seen most of the digital sculpts and artwork. They all look amazing. The love Carmen and his crew has for the Rifts® setting and characters is clearly evident. Every game component we have seen is well thought out, expertly executed and looks great.

We also heard Carmen's preliminary plans for the **Kickstarter launch in April**. He left us so pumped up we can hardly wait for it all to happen. The Kickstarter launch is tentatively slotted for the *middle or end of April, 2017*.

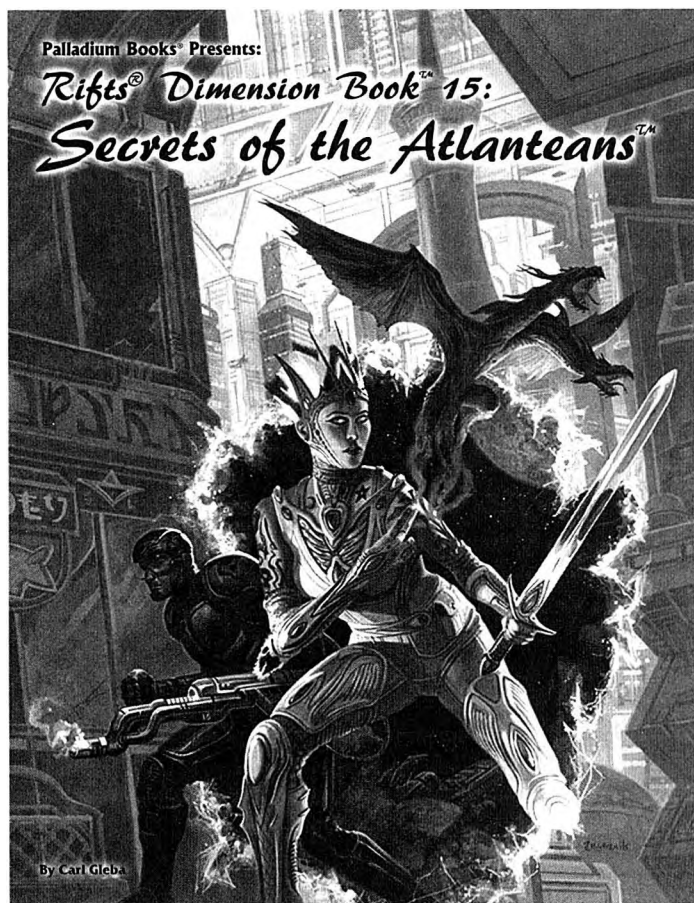
Many of you may think you want the Rifts® Board Game for the impressive miniatures featuring many of your favorite iconic characters! Ah, but while that may be what draws you in, you will love the game itself. It is fast, fun and truly captures the essence of Rifts® in a tabletop game. Each game lasts approximately 60-90 minutes on average, as you battle your way through the Chi-Town 'Burbs against the Coalition Army. The game comes with maps, cards, color rule book and detailed game pieces. The expansion packs and Kickstarter bonuses planned will also delight fans. Just wait till you see the new *Glitter Boy* miniature! Wow.

COMING!

Rifts® Secrets of the Atlanteans

Coming this Spring

True Atlanteans are descendants from Earth's past. The survivors of the sinking of Atlantis (really a dimensional mishap) and



travelers of the Megaverse, wielders of Tattoo Magic and other lost mystic arts. Most people regard them as heroes, but are they? The Sunaj Assassins are mythic villains feared by all, yet they too are True Atlanteans who serve dark forces.

For the first time, much of the story behind True Atlanteans and their secrets are revealed.

- True Atlanteans revisited.
- Optional Atlantean character creation tables including clan heritage and other factors.
- Secrets of the stone pyramids, different types/purposes and powers.
- Many new magic tattoos, magic spells, weapons and armor.
- Atlantean hideouts and secret communities across the Megaverse.
- The Sunaj Assassins, their secrets, history and plans for the future.
- Atlantean Monster Hunter O.C.C., Atlantean Defender O.C.C. and much more.
- Cover by John Zeleznik. Interior art by Walton and others.
- Written by Carl Gleba. Additional material by Kevin Siembieda.
- Final page count and price yet to be determined, but probably 192 pages – \$24.95 retail – Cat. No. 890. March or April 2017.

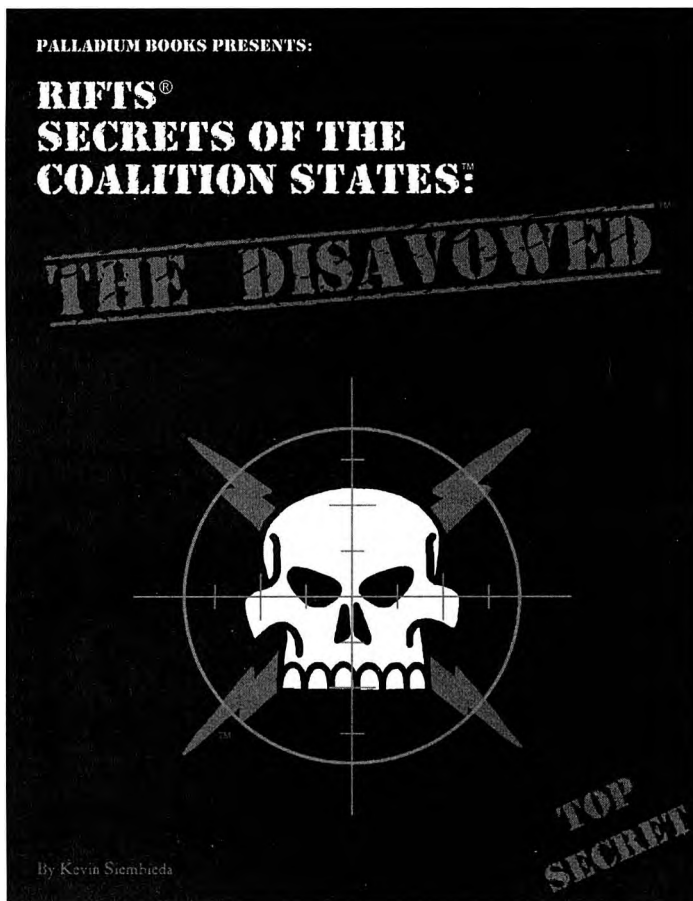
COMING! Garden of the Gods™

A Palladium Fantasy RPG® Sourcebook

This has been a secret project of Kevin Siembieda's that he has been plotting and writing in what little spare time he has. *The Garden of the Gods* is said to be a holy place watched over and

even frequented by the avatars of the gods. According to legend, the god may visit heroes and followers in dreams or in person by an avatar of the god, to be given guidance, inspiration, heroic quests, and gifts of knowledge and magic. More details about this title will follow, but he is actively writing this title, splitting his time between it and the Rifts® titles above.

- **The Garden of the Gods described in detail.**
- **Godly insight and visitations.**
- **Gifts of magic and knowledge.**
- **Sanctuary and more.**
- **The Black Pit, a place of evil and dark secrets. Is it a counterbalance to the good of the Garden or a trick of the Old Ones?**
- **Written by Kevin Siembieda.**
- **Final page count, price and catalog number yet to be determined, but probably 96 or 128 pages – \$16.95 retail. April or May release.**



COMING! Rifts® The Disavowed™

Secrets of the Coalition States™ – Coming Spring

“Desperate times require desperate measures. War has nothing to do with morality or justice. It’s all about winning or dying. We cannot bind our hands with high ideals, even our own, or worry about the laws of renegade nations or the rights of alien people. We must fight fire with fire. And you are the match.” – *Colonel Lyboc addressing a Disavowed team*

The Disavowed are so Top Secret that their existence is known only to a handful of the Coalition States’ most elite, top echelon, with *Joseph Prosek II* the mastermind behind the Disavowed

operation, and Colonel Lyboc its shadowy face. Find out who these men and women are. How the Disavowed get away with using magic, traveling to other parts of Rifts Earth and even to other dimensions in pursuit of enemies and strategic information that cannot be had through conventional means. Learn about the secret parameters in which these hard-boiled warriors, secretly hand-picked by Joseph Prosek II, operate, why almost every mission is considered a suicide mission, and why they must forever be the Disavowed.

- **CS operatives so secret that even the top military and political leaders right up to Emperor Prosek *know nothing about them*. And if they did know, would they condone their activity or condemn it?**
- **Are the Disavowed heroes or renegades? Assassins or soldiers? Madmen or super-patriots? Or a little of them all?**
- **Unsung heroes who keep the CS safe, or thugs and pawns of a shadow agency within the Coalition government?**
- **What role does the Vanguard play in this group?**
- **How do they reward their D-Bee “teammates” when the mission is over?**
- **What happens to the Disavowed when they have seen or learned too much? Adventure ideas galore and so much more.**
- **Written by Kevin Siembieda and Matthew Clements.**
- **96 pages – \$16.95 retail – Cat. No. 892. Coming April or May.**

COMING! The Rifter® #78

– Ships End of April or May, 2017

The Rifter® #78 is already in production. Articles are being selected and artwork is being assigned.

Every issue of The Rifter® is an *idea factory* for players and Game Masters to generate new ideas and find new avenues of adventure. It provides useful, ready to go source material you can just drop into your ongoing games. A doorway to new possibilities and numerous Palladium role-playing worlds. And the many new characters, O.C.C.s, powers, magic, weapons, villains, monsters, adventures and ideas for one setting can be easily adapted to *any* Palladium setting. Every issue has material for Rifts® and usually 2-3 other Palladium game lines. The focus of this issue is Rifts®, Splicers® and RPG advice. Don’t forget, unofficial material can be easily adapted for use in ANY Palladium game setting.

Rifter® #78 Highlights:

- **Rifts® – source material.**
- **A Tomes Grotesque™ Monster for Beyond the Supernatural™, “official” source material – by Kevin Siembieda.**
- **Palladium Fantasy RPG® – Part Two of a city adventure setting and source material by Ian Herbert.**
- **Splicers® – The Aftermath of I am Legion, by Charles Walton II, Chris Kluge and Lance Colley – “official” source material. Ideas and source material on where to go from here, possible adventure hooks and more.**
- **Other – source material for other RPG settings.**
- **News, coming attractions, product descriptions and more.**
- **96 pages – \$13.95 retail – Cat. No. 178. In production. Ships end of April or early May, 2017.**



Coming! Rifts® Sovietski™

The Rifts® Sovietski™ World Book presents background information on the fledgling Sovietski nation, notable cities and people, politics, and its growing army, plus Deadzones, Spetsnaz Special Forces, new bionics, Russian D-Bees, and more.

- New Cyborgs and other O.C.C.s.
- The Sovietski nation and its army.
- Weapons, new bionics, combat vehicles, and gear.
- Bunker creation tables and Deadzone tables.
- Russian D-Bees, adventure ideas and more.
- By Brandon Aten and Matthew Orr.
- 192 pages – \$24.95 retail – Cat. No. 891. Coming spring/summer 2017.

COMING! In the Face of Death™

– Summer/Fall

A Dead Reign® Sourcebook

This sourcebook is all about inner city survival. Survivor colonies finding a way to live and prosper in the big city. Conventional wisdom is living in the big population centers is impossible. These survivors prove otherwise.

- Inner city survival. Old and new O.C.C.s.
- Skyscraper communities and life on the rooftops.
- Cults – the new power in the city.
- Gangs, street runners, the new underground, and more.
- Take your zombie campaign to new heights!
- Cover by E.M. Gist. Interior art by Nick Bradshaw.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda. Adaptable to other Palladium settings.

- Size and price not yet determined – Cat. No. 237. Summer or fall.

And Don't Forget about . . .

Dead Reign® RPG. It is the aftermath of the *zombie apocalypse*. Civilization is gone, the dead reign, and the living fight to survive against impossible odds. Tales of zombies, human survival and horror as a fast-paced, easy to learn game and sourcebooks.

- **Zombie combat rules, vehicles and equipment.**
- **Six iconic Apocalyptic Character Classes and Ordinary People with 40+ occupations to choose from.**
- **Seven types of zombies plus the Half-Living.**
- **Secrets of the Dead and tips on fighting zombies.**
- **Death Cults, their Priests, power over zombies and goals.**
- **101 Random Scenarios, Encounters and Settings.**
- **100 Random Corpse Searches and other tables.**
- **Quick Roll Character Creation tables (10 minutes).**
- **A complete role-playing game by Siembieda and others.**
- **\$22.95 retail – 224 pages – Cat. No. 230. Available now.**

Dead Reign® Sourcebook One: Civilization Gone™. It has been months since the dead rose to attack the living. Civilization has crumbled. There is no army, no government, no help coming. You are on your own and things are only getting worse.

- **Madmen and Psychopaths including the Zombie Master, Ghost Walker, Backstabber, Messianic Leader, Zombie Lover, Deathbringer and others.**
- **Bandits and Raiders who prey upon other survivors.**
- **Street Gang Protectors and their mission to save lives.**
- **Phobia and Obsession tables. Many adventure ideas.**
- **House and home resource and encounter tables.**
- **Random encounter and survivor camp creation tables.**
- **Additional world information and survival advice.**
- **\$12.92 retail – 64 pages – Cat. No. 231. Available now.**

Dead Reign® Sourcebook Two: Dark Places™. Secrets of survival, including using railroad tracks and the urban underground to travel unseen and undetected by zombies.

- **Worm Meat, Bug Boy, Sewer Crawler and Impersonator Zombies.**
- **“Live Bait” zombie lures with human beings as bait.**
- **Traveling the rails and boxcar encounter tables.**
- **Traveling sewer tunnels, steam tunnels & other dark places.**
- **The pitfalls and dangers of the urban underground.**
- **Diseases, infection and additional world information.**
- **Random encounter tables, boxcar content tables, and more.**
- **\$12.92 retail – 64 pages – Cat. No. 232. Available now.**

Dead Reign® Sourcebook 3: Endless Dead™. The zombie hordes grow in number and strangeness. Can humankind survive? Where is the military?

- **New types of zombies like Fused Zombies and the Walking Mass Grave.**
- **New O.C.C.s including Wheelman, Zombie Hunter & Zombie Researcher.**
- **Info & tables for weaponizing vehicles and vehicle combat rules.**

- **Random encounter tables for military bases, police stations, gun stores, buildings, suburbs, industrial parks, small towns, farmland and wilderness.**
- **Tables for creating Survivor caravans, hideouts, Safe Havens & more.**
- **Timetable for setting zombie campaigns and many adventure ideas.**
- **\$16.95 retail – 96 pages – Cat. No. 233. Available now.**

Dead Reign® Sourcebook 4: Fear The Reaper™. Everything you could want to know about the heroic Road Reapers. Heroes who, like knights of old, travel the highways and byways to fight zombies and help survivors.

- **Comprehensive background on the legendary Road Reapers.**
- **Their code, missions, strategies and tactics.**
- **Areas of specializations, notable weapons and gear.**
- **The Terror Zombie and more.**
- **\$12.95 retail – 48 pages – Cat. No. 234. Available now.**

Dead Reign® Sourcebook 5: Graveyard Earth™. This expansive world book takes a look at the Zombie Apocalypse and how survivors are faring around the globe. Every country in the world has been changed by the rise of the dead. This sourcebook gives you that overview of the world.

- **Many random tables, encounters and adventure ideas set around the world.**
- **Random Safe Havens by region.**
- **How to get home from abroad, zombie threat levels and more.**
- **Timetable for setting zombie campaigns and many adventure ideas.**
- **\$12.95 retail – 64 pages – Cat. No. 235. Available now.**

A Dead Reign® Sourcebook: Hell Followed™. This book begins to redefine the zombie genre. It broadens the field of possibilities and expands upon the modern zombie mythos. It is full of twists and surprises you will not see coming. Be more than a survivor. Do something about it.

- **11 New types of zombies.**
- **7 New Apocalyptic Character Classes.**
- **Masked Lunatics – heroes or madmen?**
- **Cults, good and bad, plus other weirdness and dangers.**
- **21 Disasters to complicate survival.** Each described with damage stats, penalties and consequences. The most comprehensive information of this type ever presented! Suitable for any game world.
- **Government enclaves and conspiracy theories, and creation rules.**
- **Abandoned Emergency Relief Centers and the resources they offer.**
- **160 pages – \$20.95 retail – Cat. No. 236. Available now.**

Robotech® RPG Tactics™

Wave Two is coming Fall 2017 ... but you can get started with the *core box set* and *Wave One expansions* – available now

If you love Robotech®, you want to take a look at this game. Beautifully detailed game pieces of your favorite Robotech® mecha, and fast playing rules that capture the Robotech® experience

in a new, exciting way. And this is just the beginning. We have so much more planned in the years ahead.

● **Robotech® RPG Tactics™ Box Set (Main Box Game) – Cat. No. 55100 – \$99.95 retail price.** This is the game Robotech® fans have wanted for decades. **Robotech® RPG Tactics™** is a fast-paced, tabletop combat game that captures the action and adventure of the **Robotech®** anime. Two or more players can engage in small squad skirmishes or scale up to massive battles. Relive the clashes of the First Robotech War, engage in stand-alone tactical games, or use the dynamic game pieces to enhance your Robotech® RPG experience. Or simply collect your favorite mecha from an expanding range of top-notch game pieces. Get yours now, so you can build your armies and have them ready when Wave Two is released.

The First Six Robotech® RPG Tactics™ Expansion Packs are available to retail along with the main box game. Here are the SKUs and retail prices.

- **UEDF Valkyrie Wing – Cat. No. 55201 – \$36.95 retail.**
- **UEDF Tomahawk/Defender Destroyers – Cat. No. 55202 – \$32.95 retail.**
- **UEDF Spartan/Phalanx Destroyers – Cat. No. 55203 – \$32.95 retail.**
- **Zentraedi Regult Battlepods – Cat. No. 55401 – \$36.95 retail.**
- **Zentraedi Artillery Battlepods – Cat. No. 55402 – \$36.95 retail.**
- **Zentraedi Glaug Command – Cat. No. 55403 – \$36.95 retail.**
- **Robotech® RPG Tactics™ Rulebook – Cat. No. 55105 – \$20.00 retail.** Note: This is the same rulebook that is included in the main game box, and is offered separately for those who want an extra copy, or want to check out the rules before buying the whole game.



The Rifter®

2017 Super-Subscription Offer

- Free gift(s)
- \$16 savings off cover price
- Free shipping of each issue in the USA
- Each fun issue delivered to your doorstep
- Each is a sourcebook for the Palladium Megaverse®
- Must put “Sub Offer #232017” in the *memo area* of your check.

Looking for fresh, bold ideas, adventures or source material for your games? Then **The Rifter®** is for you. Every issue of **The Rifter®** presents unofficial and/or official source material such as new monsters, magic, powers, weapons, hardware, villains, O.C.C.s, adventure, fiction and new ideas for at least three (often more) adventure settings, from **Rifts®** and **Splicers®** to **Heroes Unlimited™**, **Palladium Fantasy RPG®** and/or any variety of other Palladium world settings. It also presents the latest news, product release info, and peeks at new game releases. Many out of print issues are coveted *collector's items*. For a while, people were reportedly paying as much as \$70 for *issues #4 and 21*.

Super-Subscription Offer

The cover price of **The Rifter®** is **\$13.95** – a steal for 96 pages of RPG source material and adventures. But a subscription gets you **The Rifter®** delivered to *your doorstep* for only **\$9.95 an issue**. And you can select a **free gift worth \$20.95 to \$43.85** available *only* during this special offer, for the cost of shipping and handling. All prices are in U.S. dollars. **Offer ends March 20, 2017** only for readers of **The Rifter®**.

- **\$39.80 – USA. That's only \$9.95 each, a savings of \$16.00, and Palladium pays the shipping!** Plus you get to select a FREE subscriber's gift worth \$20.95-\$43.85 (please include \$7.00 to cover shipping and handling). That's **\$46.80 total** including shipping and handling for the free gift. **Note:** This rate is *limited* to subscribers in the *USA only*. Sorry.
- **\$61.80 – Canada. That's \$15.45** for each issue of **The Rifter®**, plus you get to select a FREE subscriber's gift (please include \$12.00 to cover shipping and handling). That's **\$73.80** including the gift item. That's still not a bad price for *four 96 page sourcebooks*. Our apologies for the higher cost, but Palladium Books cannot cover the cost of postage to other countries. We hope you understand.
- **\$75.80 – Overseas. That's \$18.95** for each 96 page issue, plus you get to select a FREE subscriber's gift (please include \$20.00 to cover shipping and handling). That's **\$95.80** including the gift item. We are only passing along the additional postage cost, but it is hefty. Our apologies. Postal rates are out of our hands. Likewise, the purchaser is responsible for any duty or customs fees.

Note: Please indicate if the gift items are **NOT** wanted. You may decline the gift and get your subscription for the regular price of \$39.80 (USA), \$61.80 (Canada) or \$75.80 (other countries). **Offer #232017 ends March 20, 2017** for Rifter readers only.

A FREE gift worth \$20.95 to \$43.85

You pay only the *cost of shipping and handling* (\$7.00 in the USA, \$12.00 Canada, and \$20.00 overseas) for the FREE gift. Your choices are as follows:

- **Gift choice #1 – Rifter® “Collector’s Pack” (3 books; 336 pages):** FREE, out of print issues of **The Rifter® #5** (Rune Weapons, Spatial Magic, Werebeasts, Rifts® O.C.C., HU2 Heroes thru the Ages, Rahu-Man™, and more) and **The Rifter® #6** (HU2 robots, Russian gods, assassins, and more) – plus **The Rifter® #14** (Ninjas & Super-spies, Fadetown™, Fantasy adventure, and more) – a **\$43.85 value** (we sell #5 and #6 only at conventions for \$15.95 each).
- **Gift choice #2 – Comic Book Fun Pack (2 books):** FREE **A+Plus #5** (Detroit's first comic, 1978, published by *Kevin Siembieda* and *Alex Marciniszyn*, \$15 value), and **Rifts® Machinations of Doom** (graphic novel & sourcebook – art by *Ramon K. Perez*) – a **\$33.95 value**.
- **Gift choice #3 – “Down Under” Action Pack (2 books):** FREE **Rifts® World Book 19: Australia and Mutants Down Under** (an *After the Bomb®* sourcebook by *Erick Wujcik*, easily adapted to **Rifts®** or **Heroes Unlimited™**) – **\$31.85 value**.
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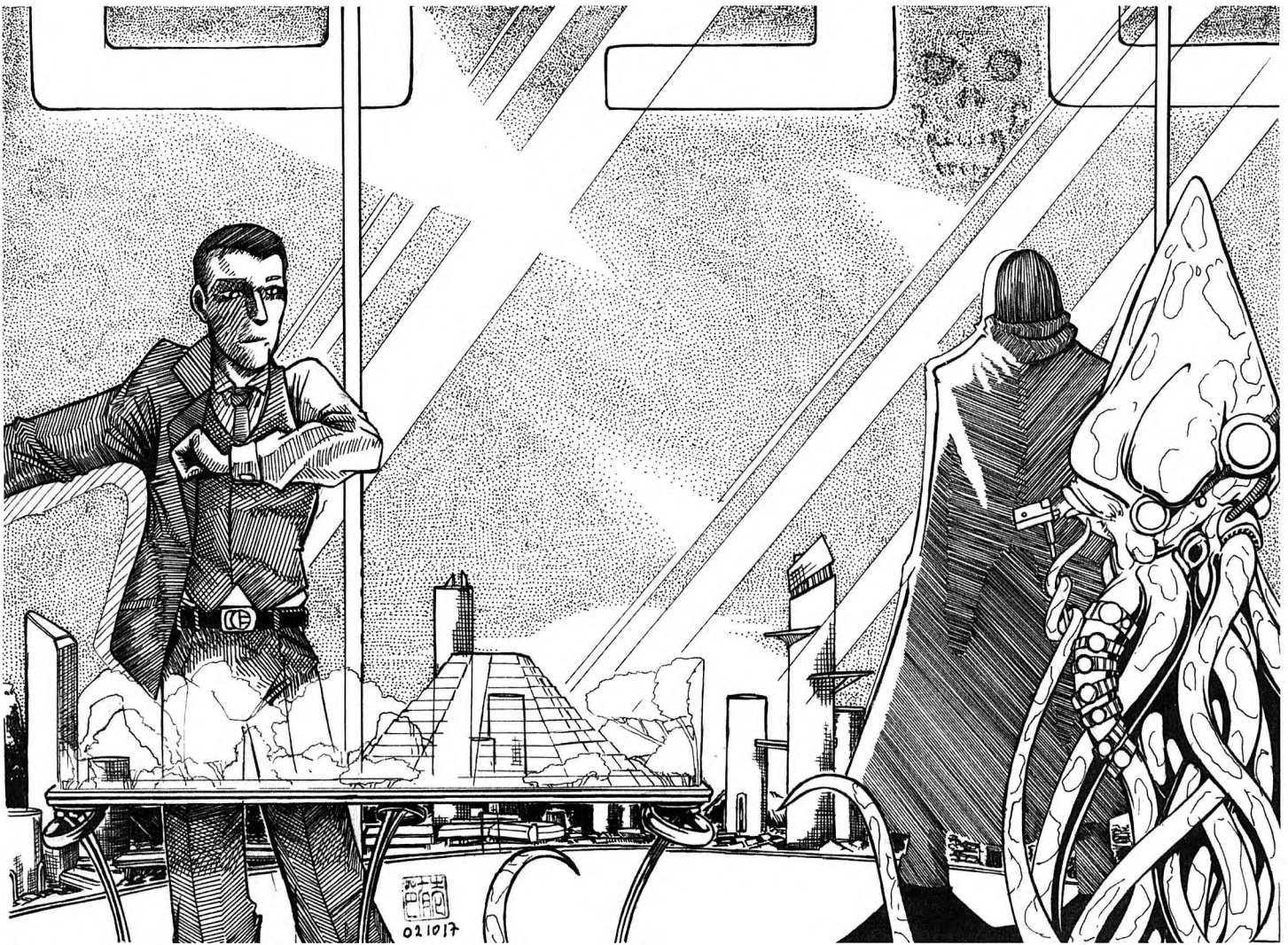
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Nowhere

A TW Community in the Pecos Badlands

Optional Source Material for Rifts®

By Brett Caron

Welcome to a guide to a new setting within Rifts® North America, the frontier Techno-Wizard community of *Nowhere*. Great for use with **Rifts® World Book 14: New West™**, **Rifts® World Book 15: Spirit West™**, **Rifts® World Book 13: Lone Star™**, **Rifts® World Book 1: Vampire Kingdoms™**, **Rifts® World Book 28: Arzno™ – Vampire Incursion**, **Rifts® World Book 11: Coalition War Campaign™**, **Rifts® The Coalition States™ Heroes of Humanity™** sourcebook, and **Rifts® World Book 35: Megaverse® in Flames™**, just prior to the Minion War™ and the first year or so of the war.

Introduction

Or “Blue Skies for a better tomorrow”

“We were somewhere outside of Lone Star, on the bones of the old I-10 highway, when I caught my first glimpse of Nowhere. I blinked at those sparkling towers rising out of the desert like the fingers of some bright and shiny god or a sleeping giant tearing itself from the wasteland. Maybe that’s what Nowhere is. What Acari and his people want it to be: A newborn titan astride the Earth, drunkenly reaching for the sky, unconcerned with who will get crushed if they stumble.”

- From the book *“Chasing Nowhere: A Blue Future Red,”* by the Mystic journalist T.H.S. Anagram.

Near the southwest border of the territory claimed by the Coalition State of Lone Star, travelers may be surprised to glimpse a handful of glittering towers where a year ago there was nothing but desert scrub. At night, searching beams of magical daylight stab upwards and play along the sides of the buildings – defiantly high, in an echo of pre-Rifts skyscrapers, daring the hostile world to try and tear them down. They sparkle with glass and silver, an oasis of Techno-Wizardry – the burgeoning city of Nowhere.

Nowhere is located not far (just over 100 miles/160 km away) from the ruins of pre-Rifts *Austin, Texas*, and about 160 miles (256 km) northwest of Los Alamos. It stands where the tiny com-

munity of **Largoz** did until its destruction about a year ago. The town's fate was sealed the moment an ambitious Techno-Wizard named **Hank Acari** came to them with an exciting proposition.

Acari brought the news of a startling development in Techno-Wizardry, a revolution already sweeping the Pecos Empire (or at least the one tiny community he had done a pilot project for, but they did not need to know that). He and his group of adventurers won over the Council of Largoz through a combination of favors, scheming, and manipulation; using their magical and psionic powers to ensure a popular vote was carried to drown out any naysayers. Meanwhile, empty eye sockets watched them from the shadows above the grinning teeth of a rotting skull, an ancient and malicious mind contemplating how best to take advantage of this new development.

Long before Hank and his associates landed their battle-scarred hovercraft at Largoz, and appealed to the Council, the Techno-Wizard had lucked out on a very different deal. After meeting Hank in Lazlo, a Shifter known as Valentine agreed to funnel some of his considerable fortune into a bold, new technology – Techno-Wizardry which confers the ability to transfer P.P.E. from a ley line to a destination far from the originating line! Wagering that this would be a destabilizing development in North America, the slippery dimensional mage wanted to make sure that he was at least somewhat in control of its implementation.

Valentine himself has been a destabilizing influence across North America, supporting or crushing various smaller factions in the Canadian Magic Zone and Pecos Empire for reasons which remain known only to him. Recently, he had begun a feud with the Quebec-based mercenary outfit, the **Stoned Tentpole Pilots** and antagonizing their dragon hatchling leader, Mah Gun Ghuz. False flag attacks against Free Quebec and the Coalition using troops dressed in STP colors, spying on and sabotaging the dragon's plans, and directly mocking the flightless and insecure dragon eventually made him (Mah Gun Ghuz) desperate enough to turn to outside assistance in order to kill the interfering Valentine. That help was another Shifter, this one an undead abomination from the Rifts.

The necromantic creature known as **Odem Mortis** accepted the dragon's offer and agreed to wipe Valentine from the face of the Megaverse, requisitioning some of Mah Gun Ghuz's troops and resources to do so. But the death worshipping undead Shifter was careful in his promises – Mortis dreams of ending *all life*, and thus Valentine cares little for the pathetic dragon's problems. However, once Mortis discovered Valentine's connection to Acari, he became curious as to how this "pipeline technology" fit the other Shifter's schemes – and how it might be put to his own nefarious ends. He decided to wait and see. After all, what is time to an immortal sustained by dark magic?

Months later, the final section of TW pipeline was completed. With much fanfare, the glowing basin of the fountain began to fill with P.P.E. for the first time. The people of Largoz gathered to celebrate their new fortune, not yet knowing how short-lived their happiness would be. While Acari and his crew had busied themselves with construction, their unseen foe had watched and waited, laying the foundation for a different project. That night, doom came to Largoz.

With more of his magical duplicates keeping Valentine busy in another dimension, the necromantic monster known as Odem Mortis descended on the town with troops composed of demonic

minions, zombies, and animated dead. Summoning a vast swarm of locusts to create more confusion, Mortis, spent some time examining the pipeline up close while Hank and the town's defenders fought off their attackers. Raising newly killed Largozians to join the conflict. Mortis withdrew when he had the information he wanted, but by then the community was devastated. As the insect swarm dissipated and those demons still alive retreated to their various hell dimensions, Hank Acari and a few other town survivors found themselves in a barren wasteland. The locusts had devoured the town's crops, leaving too little food for even the tiny number of survivors. Their well was poisoned, the undead creature's last spiteful act before departing. Hank and the people of Largoz had not even realized who or what they were up against before it was all over. Just like that, Hank's first great accomplishment since fighting against the Coalition's Siege on Tolkeen, was rendered moot.

Standing before the shocked, despairing survivors, the scion of Tolkeen smelled opportunity. While his Mind Melter associate moved unseen through the crowd, spreading good empathic vibes to sway already desperate people, Hank played them like a fiddle. Between condemnations of the monsters who had destroyed their home, his magically amplified voice boomed promises of salvation. He swore to assemble the finest minds in Techno-Wizardry to achieve his aims; people of character and conscience who would build a better tomorrow.

It was then and there that the town of **Nowhere** was born. Starting as little more than an idea and a solemn promise in the hearts of a paltry two dozen people who would become the basis of the true believers in a better future, a Blue Future, and the technological savior who would bring them prosperity. The cost would be leashing their destinies to the will and ego of a man who might be more concerned with his own glory than the well-being of any of the peoples of Earth.

P3 Energy – The “Pecos Pipelines”

“The survivors of Tolkeen, may not have lost their lives, but they did lose hope. Not me. I see a bright future for humanity, for all peoples of Earth. And the secret to that future is blue energy.

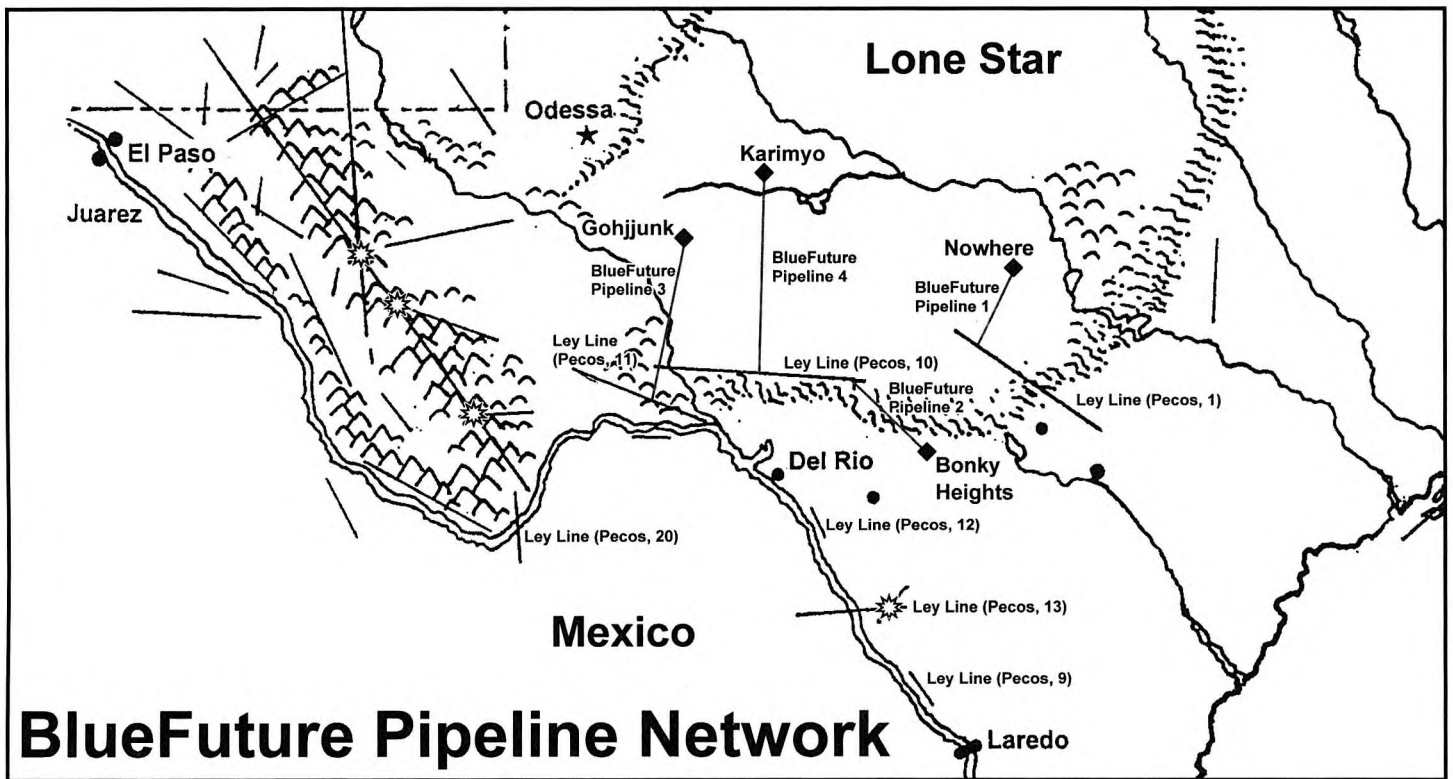
“Sure, any wizard can build a house on a ley line or a nexus and call it ‘tapping into free energy.’ Lazlo does it – hell, they’ve even tapped Rift energy if you believe the hype. Dweomer. Psyscape. Even the damn Sploogies do it. But how does that help the other 99% of people who don’t cast fancy spells or ley line walk through the air?

“If everyone was a mage, who would bake the bread for a living? Who would raise the cattle? Who’d fix the cars or make glass for windows? I see a future where that doesn’t matter, where everyone can use blue energy to make their lives easier no matter what they do for a living. Why learn to work magic when magic can work for you?

“Prosek and his clowns don’t want this getting out. They count on people’s fears of ley lines, of the Blue Zones where the Rifts open and ghosts haunt the living. They’ll tell you that ley lines aren’t safe, and maybe they’re right.

“But what if I told you that you didn’t have to be on a ley line to enjoy free magic energy delivered, via SCIENCE, right to your community’s front door?

“At BlueFuture Industries, we take the mysticism out of the magic and make products that work for everyone, not just the



magical or psychic elite. Our patented P3 Energy system means that your town or city can take advantage of what ley line communities have known since the Dark Ages – the power of blue energy.

“Now ... who wants to blow something up?”

- Hank Acari, CEO of BlueFuture Industries, speaking to a group of village elders shortly before a weapons demonstration.

If there’s one thing Hank Acari is not, its shy about his inventions. As soon as he had his working prototype set up in Bonky Heights, he hit the road to tour the Southwest with his pipeline concept. Drawing in crowds with flashy displays of pyrotechnics showmanship, and keeping them interested with two words: *safe magic*. The news (or at least the rumor of a crazy Techno-Wizard down in the Pecos Empire running his mouth about some blue energy revolution) is spreading fast and attracting more attention by the week.

The P3 (Potential Psychic Pipeline energy) design utilizes a simple principle – to bring constant ley line energy to the consumer. There’s very little actual movement of P.P.E. involved; instead, each 1 mile (1.6 km) section of pipeline merely extends the distance between two specialized Mystic Portals, one at a collector on the ley line itself and another at the end point- and through them, a conductive array that collects P.P.E. into a simple reservoir potentially hundreds of miles away! (Each section of device is a Ley Line Device which utilizes Mystic Portal, Transferal, Energy Bolt, Energy Field, and Energy Sphere.)

Most (95%) of each pipeline is underground, dug and constructed and buried in segments by **Chilopod Crawler ‘bots** (detailed below). After 2D6+10 days, very little evidence remains, but Detect Magic and other methods of sensing active Techno-Wizard items reveals the hidden pipeline below. However, inquisitive creatures of magic that can sense mystic energy are often found in the vicinity along a pipeline, sometimes even interfering with it. When this happens, it is best to exterminate or

capture the creature for study, but the annoyance has been enough that Belmont conspired to steal a cache of deactivated Skelebots for teleportation quick-response teams! Luckily, CS Intelligence has not yet connected this theft with Nowhere, but if they discover one such team and recognize the modified robots, they may go so far as to flatten Nowhere or any community who utilizes their questionable technology, just to send a message to everyone else. These repurposed old-style Skelebots have been outfitted with a mix of conventional and TW weaponry running off internal P.P.E. batteries. When a section of pipeline is disturbed, a Mystic Alarm spell activates a transponder within the Think Tank complex and automatically teleports a squad of 6 robots directly to the problem area within 1D4 melee rounds! If they are able to destroy or pacify the disturbance, the robots signal for retrieval via another Mystic Alarm, at which point a live BlueFutures employee comes to relocate them.

Hank Acari has a taste for the theatrical, and his designs usually display this to one degree or another. The endpoint of each pipeline is a white stone or polished silver fountain, the basin of which is a hemispherical energy field (using Sheltering Force) to create a semi-permeable membrane that allows people to “dip” into the stored P.P.E. and recharge the batteries of their BlueFuture items (or any Techno-Wizard item) in minutes!

Important Note: Despite Acari’s marketing, this is *not* bonafide ley line energy! It is simply P.P.E. harvested from ley lines and gathered at a distant reservoir (holding 1,000 P.P.E.), which regenerates at the same rate as a mage may draw energy from a ley line (40 P.P.E. per minute). None of the Ley Line Walker O.C.C. abilities or similar magical enhancement may be used, psychic powers do not benefit from the bonuses resulting from proximity to ley lines, Psi-Stalkers and Dog Boys see their powers function normally, etc. Only the P.P.E. is available.

Over the last year, Hank Acari has spent time and resources courting his Pecos neighbors and tempting them with his “magic” energy and new TW weapons. So far, he has made inroads with

a few of the small communities closest to **Nowhere**. The current pipelines are:

Bonky Heights: The very first pipeline, built mostly underground to the small community's lower levels. This town is built vertically into pre-Rifts ruins buried in a huge, sloping hill, protected up top by heavy plating. Since Bonky Heights survives by harvesting gasoline from the adjacent subterranean, monster-infested refinery and selling it to other towns in the area, Acari has flooded the market with tech for living underground – TW lights, TW tools, TW mining and navigation instruments, metal detectors, and more – now their profit margins (and survival rate) have never been higher. With so many new ventures now demanding his attention, however, Hank simply sends a representative to collect the monthly fee and only visits the proof of concept if it malfunctions.

Gohjjunk: By far, Hank Acari's most exciting deal, it was the news of this arrangement which convinced *Divillo* to go along with BlueFuture's pitch. Bowlock insisted on her pipeline completing its construction before her neighbors, and Acari was only too happy to divert some of *Z-Doktor's* robotic insect-like constructors to the cause. All it cost her was a continual train of scrap to be shipped to Acari's city, and she wasn't doing anything with that junk anyway. Now that the project is finished, BlueFuture products have become commonplace among the slavers and overclass in Gohjjunk, and have allowed the Harmony, with their high base P.P.E., to increase their workload by more than 50%! *Z-Doktor* has yet to obtain a living Harmonic subject to work with, and even his efforts to obtain a corpse have failed. Moreover, due to some quirk of the aliens' gestalt psychic field, Harmonic bodies decay 50% faster when further than 10 miles (16 km) from a living Harmonic.

Karimyo: Having brokered the deal with BlueFuture to maintain the pipeline, *Divillo the Ant eater* managed to secure a lease for TW water collectors to replace his enslaved Water Warlock should something happen to their arrangement. So far, the *Honey King* has been excited at the new possibilities of expanding Karimyo's reach with the use of BlueFuture's incredible technology – Summon and Control Insect beehives are next on his list. But if their relationship begins to sour once the pipeline is completed (less than 2 months away), Hank may consider assassinating the Elemental Mage to ensure that Karimyo becomes totally reliant on BlueFuture for their water in the arid Badlands region.

Largoz – rebuilt and renamed *Nowhere*: This was the first official “sold” pipeline, originally built for the community of Largoz, against the wishes of High Counselor Claudio. Largoz was destroyed at the hands of Odem Mortis and his monstrous minions in an attempt to slay Valentine, Hank Acari's partner. Both Acari and Valentine survived, and have since transformed Largos into their corporate headquarters dubbed, **Nowhere**. With demons already making inroads to Rifts Earth at the time for the Minion War about to erupt, neither realizes who was responsible for the destruction of Largoz. Nor do they realize that the monster Odem Mortis or the dragon Mah Gun Ghuz back at Free Quebec hold a lasting desire to destroy them and their little empire-building scheme. **Note:** A (secret) secondary pipeline has since been constructed, which terminates within the **BlueFuture compound** of **Nowhere**. Acari's showcase city of the future. The energy from this secret pipeline is NOT known or available to the public.

Coming soon to a town near you! Hank Acari plans to extend pipeline services to more of the major satellite communi-

ties in the Pecos Empire before finally approaching **Sabre Lasar** himself! He intends to seduce the Emperor of Pecos with a pitch about becoming the true leader of a powerful nation. One connected by infrastructure and powered by magic! Providing pipelines to other communities would allow Lasar to bring them into the fold and drawing more people to his banner who would normally only support him in time of war with the Coalition Stats or the vampires to the south. Of course, Acari is looking forward to the increased power and influence he would enjoy with so much sway over a proper “Empire.” But BlueFuture's inroads with Lasar are only through Valentine, Acari's Shifter benefactor, and even the powerful dimensional mage has so far failed to obtain a private audience with the Emperor Lasar.

Always dreaming of ever greater heights, Acari has become intrigued by rumors of secretive magicians in **the Land of A Thousand Islands** who can create ley lines using ancient techniques. He doesn't know any more than this, but is seriously considering an expedition into South America to find out more. If he is able to locate the *Nazca Line Makers*, he will try to purchase or barter for the knowledge he seeks. When the Nazca refuse, he is likely to try more underhanded tactics. Neither Acari nor any of his trusted agents are above theft, coercion, black mail or murder to obtain what he wants.

Nowhere

A City of Employees

“Valentine promised to put me in a room with the Board of Directors, but he didn't say how or when. He just gave me a key to one of those awful, spider-made wooden homes and told me to wait for the interview. A few days later, BlueFuture got in touch to delay my appointment, and they had the nerve to ask if I would be interested in putting my talents to use in the field as a consultant.

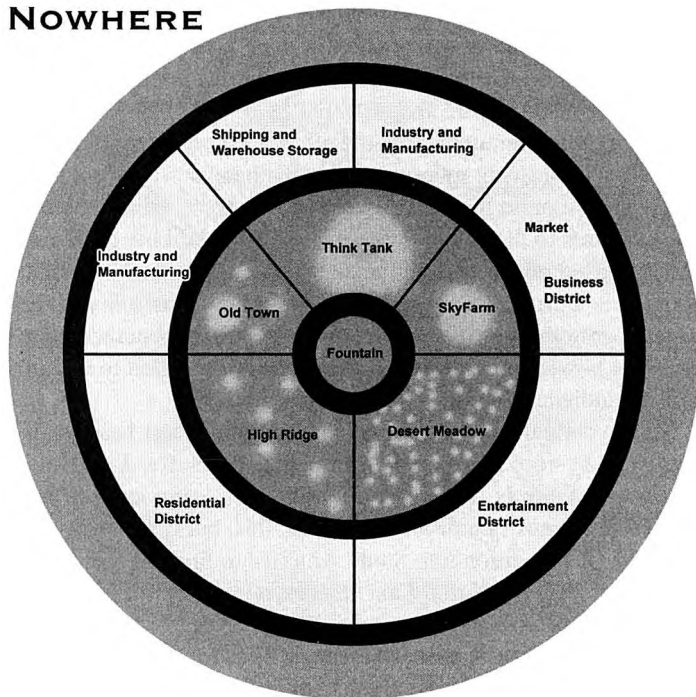
“I was getting the distinct feeling that there were a lot of adventurers here that the Company was keeping on a string, and was ready to jerk the carrot to bring along a little low-risk investment into the field. And the longer these impromptu missions kept cropping up, I started to think that the only way I was going to get that interview was if the damn Shifter, Valentine, teleported me onto the conference table in the middle of a Board meeting – if he ever came back for me at all.”

- From the book, *Chasing Nowhere: A Blue Future Red*, by the Mystic journalist T.H.S. Anagram.

People come to **Nowhere** to work. It is expected and welcomed. The place never stops. Even at night, the construction and expansion continues as some inhabitants sleep and others party all night long. The pace is something people either get used to, or they leave.

The ever-growing nation is very new, and as such, there are still very few native citizens, only babies born there in the last few months. Everyone else is an immigrant, many are refugees from the destruction of Tolkeen at the hands of the CS, or flee the lawless of the Pecos Empire, or are trying to escape persecution now that **Fort El Dorado (Arkansa)** has become a full-fledged Coalition State. Others hail from all across the New West, Mexico, and far east as the Magic Zone, and Dinosaur Swamp, or have

NOWHERE



come from the Rifts. The result is a population that straddles all walks of life, often desperate and impressionable. The zeitgeist of Nowhere is that no matter where a being comes from, they can work hard and achieve their dreams – something the Coalition States offered in the early day. It is an optimism all too foreign to the peoples of Rifts North America.

The citizens of Nowhere say that the infectious energy of the place is because of all the great things humanoids are capable of and achieving when they work together. That and the company line that “Blue energy is the future.” When visiting other communities, the patriotism of BlueFuture “true believers” often comes across as condescending or vainglorious, and as such, they have a reputation for big egos and zealous devotion to “the company.”

Nowhere Population:

- 9,452 people live in Nowhere full time, with more arriving every week (4D6+20 new workers and/or their families).
- 2D6x10 transient adventurers pass through town on at any given day and many people are curious as the rumors spread.
- 6D6+60 visiting Pecos raiders/bandits divided into 1D4+6 small rival/allied gangs are a regular presence for the same reason. BlueFuture Security frowns on larger groups congregating in town.
- 4D6+6 visiting Mojave or Papago Indigenous people.
- 1D6x10 visiting Psi-Stalkers, usually from the *Star Pack* or *Rattlestaff* tribes.

Note: Public opinion is still split on what to call themselves, although “Nowheresians,” “Nobodies,” and “No’s” are popular.

Population Breakdown:

- 57% Humans.
- 38% D-Bees of various types, especially those most often found in the New West and Lone Star – most are humanoid to some degree, but not all.
- 2% Civilized Psi-Stalkers.
- 2% Mutant animals, including runaways from Lone Star.
- 1% Creatures of magic, supernatural beings, and others.

Occupational Breakdown:

- 70% Unskilled/skilled laborers, workers, and administrators along with their families.
- 10% Men-at-arms, including mercenaries, Headhunters, and RPA pilots (including BF Security).
- 6% Magic O.C.C.s; mostly Ley Line Walkers and Mystics.
- 4% Techno-Wizards.
- 5% Psychic R.C.C.s.
- 4% Juicers, Crazies, and cyborgs.
- 1% Other.

Nowhere Government

Although Nowhere’s ruling body is ostensibly a democratic one, the so-called **Council** at Nowhere is a farce. This is, of course, exactly as Hank Acari and Valentine likes it. During the initial reconstruction phase, Acari took the reins not only in the design of Nowhere’s layout, but made sure that BlueFuture would have a powerful voice on the coming Council. Like Hank Acari himself, the plan was bold but not immediately obvious. He insisted on representation for his burgeoning organization, and from there has systematically either corrupted, blackmailed, or replaced every member on *the Council* with “company men.” Every vote held by the Council body might as well be settled in the Think Tank’s stone-and-glass boardroom of BlueFuture where Hank Acari sits as the company’s leader.

BlueFuture’s tendrils are dug deep into everything that makes Nowhere *run*. It is an intricate arranged plan that favors and protects Acari and The Company. Thus, the Council is little more than another BlueFuture machine made up of thinking beings that manages the day to day minutia of the community so he can focus on bigger ideas. And of course, the town of Nowhere relies upon BlueFuture and Acari for everything. If it was not for his scrap metal recycling initiative and stockpiling of various metals and alloys, the infrastructure would have no copper for pipes or wiring. If not for the ability to create and filter water through magic, the Council would have to figure out how to find and pump new wells. And then there is the source of power that fuels everything, the BlueFuture pipeline. The list goes on and on. Those who have figured this out have done so with a mix of apprehension and resignation. After all, what other options do they have? Besides, Hank Acari and his partner (enforcer) Valentine, might just be geniuses who really offer a grand future for those who support the Company.

The Council of Nowhere

“The man-child Claudio and the pack of sycophants and greedy monsters who call themselves The Council of Nowhere are uniformly and securely in the pocket of Big Blue, with the notable exceptions of the pale and probably deranged Vinn 989, that poor violated bastard, and the refreshingly brutal, Sornip Lo Krell Dithisap, who speaks her cold conscience, but is entirely unwilling to share her pipe with a hung over journalist who wants to vaporize some Gryxlian mind-poison and take the interview to the next level.

“The way they cut and parry with each other, you’d never know that by the end of the Council session most of them would be rolling over to expose their plump pink bellies, ready to receive the gently scratching fingers of Acari’s psionic sleaze. That

scum they laughably call the honest businessman who brings us the future. Of course, the Visionary himself doesn't deem it necessary to show up to most meetings. Why bother? He already knows the outcome, and this way he gets to avoid me at the same time. Very convenient."

- From the book, *Chasing Nowhere: A Blue Future Red*, by the Mystic journalist T.H.S. Anagram.

The Council is made up of nine citizens of Nowhere. Most also serve in some other function for the public, and act as heads of bureaucracy for their various areas of expertise. The Lead Counselor is the same man who once led Largo, as are two of the other Counselors, but the other members are either new citizens of Nowhere settled after the reconstruction, employees of BlueFuture, or both.

Michael Claudio, High Counselor, Survivor of Largo: Claudio carries himself like a straight-backed hero, silver beard and salt-and-pepper hair, the picture of a patrician ruler. This front hides his paralyzing fear at being found out as the fraud that he is, a puppet dangled on the strings from Hank Acari's silver tongue.

A survivor of the undead attack on Largo, Claudio was irreparably scarred by the corpses of his dead children rising up under the command of the monster, Odem Mortis. Terrified out of his mind, he fled and hid until it was all over. Though he was initially antagonistic towards Hank Acari and his company, Claudio has reversed his opinion after seeing Nowhere become greater than Largo ever was. Now, he is simply terrified of losing his prestigious and illusion of position and power, even it is an position devoid of real influence or meaning. Everything he has is behold-ing to Hank Acari who hold Claudio's leash. One of his weapons against the Council Leader is knowledge and evidence of Claudio's cowardice during the fall of Largo, which keep Claudio in line, because he knows Acari would not hesitate to use that evidence to ruin him before replacing him with another puppet.

Yousef El-Amin, Councilman, Public Liaison: This dark-skinned stranger is called the Honest by many citizens – mostly because he spent weeks planting the hypnotic suggestion among the Largo survivors to spread that exact reputation and then let word of mouth do the rest. A master manipulator (M.A. of 22 and favors the powers of Hypnotic Suggestion, Empathic Transmission, and other control-oriented psionics), Yousef hitched his star to Acari's and hasn't regretted it once. His function as Liaison is, in principle, to ensure that BlueFuture conducts itself to the satisfaction of the Council – in reality, it is quite the opposite. Yousef steers the Council whichever way the Board dictates, or whichever way he decides is best. He is given a lot of leeway, but he prefers to conceal the extent of his psionic powers to any detection. Yousef is a clever man, and he has many ways to elude, avoid, or otherwise frustrate any who try to interfere with his influence over the Council.

Sashal of Gilailays, Councilman, Teacher, Survivor of Largo: The first thing most people notice when they look at the Gilailays is three piercing green eyes. They look out from a short mound of luxurious golden fur that ripples in waves to punctuate their sentences and displays their mood. Sashal's speaking voice is warm and brassy, emitting from a colorful beak reaching halfway down their chest. They don't have the concept of gender, and routinely answer to either male or female pronouns when addressed, although since learning of this binary peculiarity, the

Gilailays prefers a neutral 'they.' As the administrator of a school consisting of 30 students, Sashal has found themselves managing the burgeoning education system of Nowhere's population. Luckily for the children of Nowhere, Sashal is a gentle, kind person who enjoys their role and is happy to fulfill this new function. The Gilailays will always vote for the safety of Nowhere's people, but likes and respects Claudio enough to often vote in support of his decisions if unsure about their own position. A survivor of Largo.

Cordya, Councilman, Agricultural Expert: A Rogue Scientist and lifelong farmer, Cordya came to Nowhere quite by accident. She was pursuing a lead on SteelTree cultivation (unknown to her, this was regarding Z-Doktor) and turning up nothing – but she also stumbled across the opportunity of a lifetime. The new community had no way to produce the means to sustain itself, except for the stopgap magical solutions that they could not maintain for long. Setting to work with the power of Techno-Wizardry at her disposal, Cordya was able to keep the community afloat for the months until she and Hank developed the Vertical Farm concept that is now in use. As the de facto quartermaster of the city, Cordya deals in numbers – logistics, harvests, census populations, and growth projections, and manages SkyFarm. She votes in favor of sound, logical, well-thought-out benefits to Nowhere, but is a true believer in BlueFuture and a risk-taker.

Vinn 989, Councilman, Administrator: The human clone known as Vinn 989 is a refugee stranded on Earth after a dimensional maelstrom, one of a million body-slaves to a hideous creature who possessed entire clone-factories to mass-produce dreamscapes for its enjoyment. Luckily for Vinn, he only remembers his name and designation, has mental blocks holding back twenty-three years of constant nightmares, and possesses a sunny outlook on life. His savant technical abilities make him invaluable as a city planner and he also manages the day-to-day public services, such as the sanitation and maintenance of Nowhere's utilities (even the Techno-Wizard filtration system doesn't help if a mundane pipe bursts!) and the demands of new infrastructure. This is satisfying work for Vinn; he feels an affinity for systems and enjoys the sense of belonging. He will vote for what he thinks is the strongest idea, but is often unsure whether that's the one with the most public support or the one with the most BlueFuture support. These are sometimes the same thing, however Vinn generally respects the will of the people unless he has reason to believe that the decision will improve living conditions.

Klepp Averson, Councilman, Shipmaster, Survivor of Largo: Perhaps the single most defining feature of the lazy, amoral scumbag once known as Klepp the Schlepp is this: he's a survivor. He's been run out of most kingdoms within the greater Pecos Empire, but the closest he has ever come to death was when Odem Mortis destroyed Largo. Since then he's decided that his best shot is to stick with BlueFuture and its accompanying muscle, and he enjoys the power and prestige he gets from being a counselor. His Black Market connections keep merchandise moving in and out of the city, and he acts as a sort of transportation authority for caravans and shipping routes to and from Nowhere. He manages a staff of 24, who are responsible for tracking traffic and shipping, and they work closely with BlueFuture's own admins. Always votes with the Board and Yousef.

Sornip Lo Krell Dithisap, Counselor, Judicator: Unable to breathe Earth's atmosphere unfiltered, the many-tentacled D-Bee must constantly vaporize water through a breathing wand.

The effect resembles an aristocrat smoking using a long cigarette holder, and seems whimsical to many who see it for the first time. However, exchanging even a few words with Sornip Lo Krell Dithisap quickly abuses anyone of this notion. Her monotone voice drones as though somber and tired. It lends her an authoritative air as a judge, which is the function she performs for her city. Her species possesses an eidetic memory, and her knowledge of law and logic is similarly comprehensive. When disputes can be settled amicably, or attackers must be punished for hurting or killing citizens of Nowhere, Sornip Lo Krell Dithisap (always uses her full name) renders cold, impartial verdicts and has a habit of being blunt. She is also heading a small staff of 8 rogue scholars who are fascinated by law and justice. On very good terms with Sheriff Meyer and Vinn 989, but is openly distrustful of Yousef and the Board.

TW Construction Equipment

Techno-Wizard creations exclusive to BlueFuture Industries

Note: Although BlueFuture's catalog of devices will be released for players to utilize, TW devices in this section are not yet available for sale on any market. BlueFuture is using the designs to boom Nowhere at a rate unheard of in North America, and want to keep that momentum for themselves – at least for now. If any are stolen, Hank Acari will dispatch, or even personally lead, a kill-team to recover or destroy the robots and capture the thieves for interrogation, if possible – otherwise they are slaughtered without mercy.)

The secret to Nowhere's geometric expansion is not just magic – it is *automation*. When Hank Acari and **Z-Doktor** formalized their partnership, the latter brought his formidable experience with robotics to bear, creating revolutionary devices that function as drones, refueling their internal P.P.E. batteries at the pipeline reservoir within the BlueFuture's compound at Nowhere. These devices work around the clock to produce infrastructure for the community, including housing and municipal services like plumbing and defensive structures. They are supplemented by crews of workers to oversee construction and provide the skilled labor that is beyond the scope of the robots. The tallest buildings – the BlueFuture Think Tank, vertical farms, and the new apartment complexes to be constructed in the next phase of expansion – are all built of M.D.C. metal and concrete for their support structures, not wood like the homes of most citizens.

Chilopod Crawlers

A dozen of these insect-like constructor robots move continuously around the perimeter of Nowhere, following their programmed instructions to dig down and create foundations, leveling out depressions in other areas with the displaced earth according to the blueprints designed by Acari and his city planners. They dig the trenches for Nowhere's artificial canals and waterways, pack down earth for the roads and bridges connecting

the city together, and sift the earth they move for useful metals and ores to supplement the scrap-resources that BlueFuture prefers for their construction material.

This hulking robot's long, segmented body is about the size of a school bus and walks on ten jointed legs. The front end is a six foot (1.8 m) drill, the primary function of which is as an earthmover. Around the drill are intakes, multi-grade filters vacuuming the earth through tubes into a large, canister-like abdomen. There, the robot sorts the dirt and stone into usable material (using Create Steel) and stores the excess until it can be deposited elsewhere – in other areas, the crawlers simply eject the waste dirt off to the side like a snowblower, or pack it down over exposed pipeline.

Between the front and rear segments is a hollow section, hardly more than dorsal support struts and a quartet of robotic limbs. These are not for locomotion, but rather are used for construction and fold up against the *spine* when not in use. The middle section also includes a command chair, which is used by trained pilots to lay down sewer pipe and power cabling – and when a Techno-Wizard is operating the Chilopod, to provide the Techno-Wizard Construction rolls & P.P.E. necessary to assemble pipeline segments as the crawler lays down each mile (1.6 km) of the total device.

Latrodectus Builders

These are giraffe-like armatures, the largest of which tower over 15 feet (4.6 m) tall on four powerful legs, and resemble strange spider-cranes. They utilize magic (Telekinesis, Spinning Blades and Create Wood) to construct housing for BlueFuture employees, as well as public utilities and buildings – some plots of land are left open and leased to newcomers who wish to build their own. Create Steel is also utilized for wiring, plumbing, and other metallic elements, but the supply of base metals the Latrodectus carries is limited, so wood is used whenever possible. A dozen delicate spinneret-arms fashion the materials, which are then moved into place by the larger arms and crane-protrusion.

Watching these graceful machines in action is incredible – weaving together wood like a spider web, the robot can assemble a cottage-sized house in less than 2 hours! Larger buildings take significantly longer and require construction crews to oversee and assist the Latrodectus 'bots as they crawl around the framework laying down the walls and floors within. When the building is complete, the robot sprays down the surfaces with a hardening agent (using the Ironwood spell) to transform the simple wood into an M.D.C. structure!

Auroch Farmhands

Assisting the farmers of Nowhere are a legion of quadrupedal drones colloquially known as *Oxbots*, designed explicitly to make farming in the inhospitable desert as easy as possible. The vertical farms and the Oxbots are rented to farmers, who pay a monthly lease for their space and each of their drones. Utilizing a host of utilitarian spells (Distant Voice, Mystic Fulcrum, Levitation, Create Water), they act as multi-faceted support, irrigating each level of the farm and responding to verbal commands by the human or D-Bee farmers.

TOP SECRET

– The Schrödinger Engine

“Even stepping foot in that maniac’s lab that once was one time too many. The stink of supernatural evil made the back of my throat go dry as soon as I entered. It reminded me of embalming fluid, rotting flesh and undercooked cabbage. When I saw the half-dissected Brodkil floating in a tube of shimmering goo, I had my BigBore in my hand before I even realized what I was doing. Z-Doktor pointed out the protection circle around the tank with one of those pulsing metal tentacle-arms of his, and explained something about a lobotomy. Apparently, a good chunk of the thing’s skull was emptied out and filled with tech.

“Call me crazy, but the head of R&D cramming a skull full of cybernetics into the head of a monster is probably not great for either morale or public relations, unless you’re trying to appeal to psychopaths. Maybe that’s why Hank Acari keeps his pet mad scientist in the basement – you might reconsider your purchase if you knew the person who designed your fancy new TW gear was madman trying to reanimate and control a brain-dead demon earlier that afternoon.”

- From the book, *Chasing Nowhere: A Blue Future Red*, by the Mystic journalist T.H.S. Anagram.

Shortly after BlueFuture began to build its new home at No-where, Z-Doktor began to worry about energy. The public pipeline is vastly inefficient, producing only enough energy to fill the basin according to the Energy Sphere spell, meaning that when it is full, it is not pulling any energy from the ley line. The public demand means that the waiting time for this free energy can take hours even for people who want to recharge minor devices.

Hank Acari argued that the PR and marketing benefits outweighed the drawbacks – the fountain might be inefficient, but it brings people into town and hopefully gets them buying BlueFuture (BF) merchandise. However, the demands of so many robotic drones constantly recharging, plus the newly-instituted recharging service for P.P.E. batteries (in response to the long lines) and the construction costs for TW items in the first place have, together, rendered BlueFuture’s “magic” power generation woefully inadequate. Even with the second pipeline feeding directly to the Think Tank, BlueFuture produced a maximum output of about 57,600 P.P.E. per day. As far as Z-Doktor was concerned, this was not enough to provide the power he would need in his pursuit of science.

Revisiting an old design of his, the mad doctor spent two months (in actuality, close to a year due to time dilation) tackling a secret project, hardly leaving his lab except when absolutely necessary. Unveiling his new machine far below the Think Tank in a secure sub-level, he assured CEO Acari and Erik Belmont that his *Schrödinger Engine* would solve their power needs.

The caveat: Z-Doktor refuses to explain how his device works, and keeps it behind a powerful force field at a distance of 100 feet (30.5 m) in every direction. Uneasy, but impressed with the results, Hank Acari agreed that they would supplement their power needs with this bizarre new invention – when necessary – but he intends to find out exactly how it works, and soon. (Secretly, Hank is flabbergasted and a little upset that Z-Doktor has seemingly one-upped his pipeline concept with this self-sustaining P.P.E. generator!)

Unbeknownst to anyone but Z-Doktor, the horrific device uses ritualized Techno-Wizardry to summon forth dozens of small animals, cats and dog-sized animals from another dimension (a parallel Earth?), immediately atomizing them and converting their biomass into P.P.E. to add to the energies released at the moment of their deaths! (Uses Summon & Control Animals, Sub-Particle Acceleration, Transferal, Life Source, Energy Bolt, and Energy Sphere.) As a function of ritual magic, the Engine only runs a full cycle once per hour, but its output is unbelievable – between 5,900 – 56,800 P.P.E. a day (average is about 32,400 P.P.E.), including the cost to run the device.

G.M. Note: The force field and its large area of effect are specifically designed to keep those possessing the psionic power of Empathy from sensing the fear, pain, and suffering of the poor creatures summoned directly inside the TW Schrödinger Engine and destroyed. It also means those with Telemechanics cannot get close enough to scan the device and discern its true nature. This is circumventable, but Z-Doktor is counting on his unstable reputation to keep interested parties away from the potentially dangerous device. And it is unstable! Every month there is a 1% chance that it explodes and unleashes 1D6x1000 M.D. to everything within 500 feet (152 m) and acts as an EMP to fry any electronic devices within one mile (1.6 km). Moreover, Z-Doktor came up with the design in a dream from his id-self. His id, or was it some demonic or necromantic creature that has ulterior motives for this revolution of Techno-Wizard device that relies upon destroying the living from another world. Is this something Z-Doktor could dream up? Or is there something more ominous at work? Could Odem Mortis be some how involved? And if so, could Z-Doktor’s machine really be a doom’s day device of some kind? The Necromancy element seems to much of a coincidence, but it is all the dark secret of a madman.

BlueFuture Industries

“It took me three weeks of waiting in that goddamn cookie-cutter cottage before I managed to get in a room with Acari. He gets around – half of BlueFuture is in deep with that odd-eyed Shifter too, and whatever they’ve got cooking behind closed doors takes them out of town (or likely out of dimension) often. When I finally met the man, looked him in the eyes, I felt a crawling shiver run around my shoulders and down my arms. There’s a light in those eyes, the same ambitious insanity that burns from something strange and broken inside. It’s a fire set by the Coalition when they flattened Acari Tower and wiped out everyone Hank Acari ever loved, when they robbed him of the easy life and legacy he would’ve inherited. And damned if it isn’t the kind of fire that makes you want to follow a man.”

- From the book, *Chasing Nowhere: A Blue Future Red*, by the Mystic journalist T.H.S. Anagram.

The Board of Directors

BlueFuture’s Board of Directors are a group of three like-minded Techno-Wizards who came together because they believe that by fusing the best elements of magic and technology they can elevate humanity (and all peoples) to do anything. At least, that’s what’s on paper.

In reality, three very different minds have been brought together to produce a shocking and innovative new power in the South. What they do have in common is ambition. It was for this reason that a Shifter he encountered working as a merc decided to funnel enough credits to get them started. BlueFuture, and the threat it might represent to the status quo of North America, are part of a larger goal that a few suspect (including Acari and the Board), but the Shifter, Valentine has not yet revealed.

For the time being, the Board is free of Valentine's direct influence. The outbreak of the Minion War on Rifts Earth has drastically altered (and in fact, accelerated) the dimension mage's timeline, and he's been forced to sideline some of his ongoing projects. Until he manages to secure some kind of negotiations with Sabre Lasar, they have directed their efforts in three directions:

1. Increase profits. The buffer represented by the Shifter Valentine's initial investment has worn down to almost nothing, and the group needs to see some real profit soon. No one wants to be dependent upon the arrogant dimension mage, and Acari's other partner, Erik Belmont, worries about what risks Valentine might not share with them about his plans for their ventures. By becoming self-sufficient, Nowhere would not be beholden to any power.

2. Sell to any market. Taking a page out of the Naruni Enterprises' play book, BlueFuture is a predatory, remorseless business entity that plans to sell to anyone and everyone across political lines. None of the Board have a problem with selling weapons to terrorist groups or oppressive governments, or even monsters – their opinion is that one being's terrorist is another's freedom fighter, and one being's oppressive government is another's blissful theocracy. Often, Erik Belmont leads expeditions into combat zones to deliver their customers with the winning edge. Other times, BlueFuture has negotiated a truce by eliminating arguments over resources via TW devices – why fight over water when you have blue energy and devices to give you all the water you may ever need? Or can they. Despite the hype and advertising, BlueFuture can only syphon so much energy from ley lines, and the magical capabilities of their TW devices all have very real limitations. Right now, the company is banking on half-truths and promises it cannot really deliver.

3. Leave no stone unturned. Research drives progress, and Z-Doktor insists on absolute freedom to explore every avenue of science, magic, psionics, and everything in between. BlueFuture aggressively pursues new markets and opportunities. As such, they are not shy about sending exploratory teams through dimensional portals and even random Rifts for research and development purposes. With the time he spends "on the road" with new clients, Hank Acari has to take prototypes and early models into the field to test them out.

For now, Acari and the Board follow their directive of becoming self-sufficient. They have cut as much of their overhead as possible by relying on P.P.E. to fill the gaps, and are making good strides towards their ultimate goal. However, until they focus on distribution and getting BlueFuture energy and TW products out into the mainstream, they run the risk of collapsing under the weight of their own exaggerated success and the demands of their infrastructure to keep it all going. Combined with the astounding costs of Techno-Wizard devices and the many gems and precious metals they require, let alone the time to handcraft each one, the solution had better come quick before Hank Acari has to ask the Shifter Valentine for more money, or cut a deal with

a less benevolent patron. Hopefully, now that they are receiving their monthly payments from the neighboring communities, the tipping point into profitability will be sooner rather than later.

Henry Acari III

Techno-Wizard and heir to the now-defunct Acari Industries, CEO (Chief Executive Officer)

Before the fall of Tolkeen, the Acari name was common knowledge throughout the entire kingdom. Acari Tower was one of the oldest buildings in the Tolkeen skyline, and Acari Industries' Techno-Wizard products a household staples for many families. When the war began, the Acari family took a principled stand against the government's dealings with demonic and evil forces, even in the face of Tolkeen's tenuous survival. When the Coalition Army finally laid waste to the city, the Acari family was intentionally abandoned by many of their oligarch peers, and five generations of industry and history was ground to dust by the CS war machine.

Managing to evade the destruction of his family and homeland, Hank still found himself penniless and on the run. One more refugee among tens of thousands streaming towards Lazlo or the Pecos Empire in the hope of succor there. For a wunderkind poised to take control of a robust family company at the top of its game, Hank Acari rankled at having to demean himself assisting no-name Techno-Wizards in their Lazlo or Federation of Magic factories. As soon as he had enough credits, he traveled into the New West. There, free of his name's stigma, but appalled at the lack of ley lines in that dry, open landscape, he conceived his ideas for a pipeline of magic connecting the distant communities of the west to the perpetual power of the Ley Lines. It wasn't until he encountered the Shifter, Valentine that he found a patron willing and able to help make his dream a reality. BlueFuture Industries was born.

Hank Acari takes a direct, personal hand in much of his business operations, though desperate times has caused him to release control to some dangerous people, re. Z-Doktor. He is not afraid to take to the field to prove his products' worth – missions on behalf of the company sometimes wind up with Hank flying over a battlefield hurling TW bombs and dodging gunfire on his wing board. Several of the commercials aired during last year's *Pecos Bandito Robo-Tournament* (an annual Black Market ripoff of the Northern Gun tradition held in the Pecos Badlands) featured footage of Hank himself batting aside particle beams with a BlueFuture Energy Blade, even smashing one right back into the face of a very surprised Juicer, killing him instantly! (In reality, the custom version that Hank and his closest associates use is a far superior prototype with Targeted Deflection built into it. They cannot afford to make the superior weapon en mass, so he demos that weapon in a bait and switch move to sell the less effective TW Energy Blade with the cheap Life Source spell.)

Terribly vain and always looking to get an advantage, Henry Acari has abandoned the moral ethics that led to his family's and his nation's ruin. Nowadays he considers just about anything to make a sale or get a leg up. (As noted above). Of course, he keeps the best for himself, and has worked many of his personal Techno-Wizard items into his impeccable clothing. As a young man, he was on the bleeding edge of Tolkeen fashions and has developed quite the deadly wardrobe traveling the continent's ley

line networks. He favors tailored business suits and high-end wilderness clothing, sparing no expense on them, gear and personal TW defenses, most of them concealed. Several outer buttons and cufflinks are P.P.E. batteries, as well as other less visible batteries that add up to a large base of P.P.E. for his use in casting spells and powering TW weapons and defenses. His charismatic aura, family's reputation, and honeyed tongue are all boosted courtesy of his flashy tie clip – a TW device that magically adds to his natural charm and charisma.

Hank Acari always tries to talk his way out of trouble rather than fight, even if it is just so his opponent thinks he does not want to fight. He gets them to let their guard down, so when he does attack, it is usually with a deadly outcome. Murder is easier than battle, but bribery is easier than murder, and lying is even easier than that, and for Hank Acari, words have always been his greatest weapon. He does not believe it is ever good business practice to kill potential customers. He prefers to convince them how much better off they will be with BlueFuture in their lives than without it. And once you have the customer hooked, the trick is keeping them on the line as you reel them in for life.

Quick Stats: Hank Acari

Alignment: Aberrant evil, but very affable and charismatic.

Attributes: I.Q. 26, M.E. 17, M.A. 20 (magically boosted by 1D4+2), P.S. 11, P.P. 13, P.E. 17, P.B. 18 (magically boosted to 26), Spd 17.

Hit Points: 61. **S.D.C.:** 20.

P.P.E.: 174, plus a few small TW P.P.E. batteries incorporated into his clothing make another 200 P.P.E. available.

I.S.P.: 81

O.C.C.: 10th level Techno-Wizard and businessman.

Disposition: Quick with a smile or joke, the man carries himself with an air of genuine friendliness and honesty, but he is utterly remorseless in his pursuit of glory and cutthroat in business. A consummate lair, Acari is skilled in making people feel content and supportive of him and his company's operations, until they are in too deep to pull out. He talks a good story but is ruthless, manipulative, and rarely cares about the consequences of his actions unless it directly affects BlueFuture or himself, personally. The exception is his employees whom he treats with respect and appreciation. They are his new family, and he watches out for them. This wins him steadfast, even the fanatical loyalty of most of his employees. A great boss, terrible person.

Skills of Note: Speaks American, Dragonese, and Euro at 98%, literate in American 98%, all computer skills except Hacking 98%, Mechanical Engineer 98%, Techno-Wizard Construction 98%, TW/Ley Line Piloting 98%, Sensory Equipment 98%, Land Navigation & Surveying 97%, Weapons Engineer 98%, Vehicle Armorer 98%, Military Fortification 97%, Masonry & Civil Engineering 98%, Aircraft Mechanics 92%, Gemology 92%, Pilot Robots and Power Armor 98%, Robot Combat: Elite (NG Labor 'Bot), Jury-Rig 87%, Research 72%, Hand to Hand: Basic, W.P. Sword, W.P. Energy Pistol, W.P. Energy Rifle, W.P. Targeting, and W.P. Blunt, all at 10th level.

Attacks per Melee: Six.

Bonuses of Note: +3 on Perception Rolls regarding magic items and Techno-Wizardry, +3 to strike, +4 to parry, +4 to dodge, +3 to roll with fall or impact, +4 to pull punch, +2 to disarm,

+6 to strike with swords, +5 to strike with energy pistols and rifles.

Magic: All invocations from levels 1-7, plus a handful of spells from levels 8-15. Prefers to use his TW items rather than cast spells, but does whatever is necessary to win. He is extremely creative and resourceful when adapting existing technology to utilize his spell magic using whatever is at hand to provide the focus.

Psionics: Machine Ghost (12), Mind Block (4), Object Read (6), Speed Reading (2), Telemechanics (10), and Total Recall (2).

Equipment: A fancy Streetwolf business suit with 10 M.D.C., and incorporates P.P.E. batteries as cufflinks and buttons. Uses mostly advanced versions of BlueFuture items: a TW Lightblade incorporating Targeted Deflection (4D6 M.D., can parry magic and energy blasts back to the source as per the spell, +3 to strike, +4 to parry), a *Ley Line Blaster* (5D6+10 M.D., 2,400 feet/731 m range, unlimited payload, does not function away from ley lines). Carries a dozen TW grenades with him at all times (a few on his person, the rest in his backpack and briefcase).

His tie clip is a TW prototype device of his own design. It incorporates the spells Charismatic Aura and Aura of Power to provide the following bonuses: +3 to M.A. and +8 to P.B. attributes; duration is 18 minutes. Cost of activation is 12 P.P.E. His wristwatch is also TW device that causes Time Slip for the cost of 10 P.P.E. per use or with Superhuman Speed also at a cost of 10 P.P.E. He is likely to travel with several other BlueFuture TW weapons, devices and experimental prototypes.

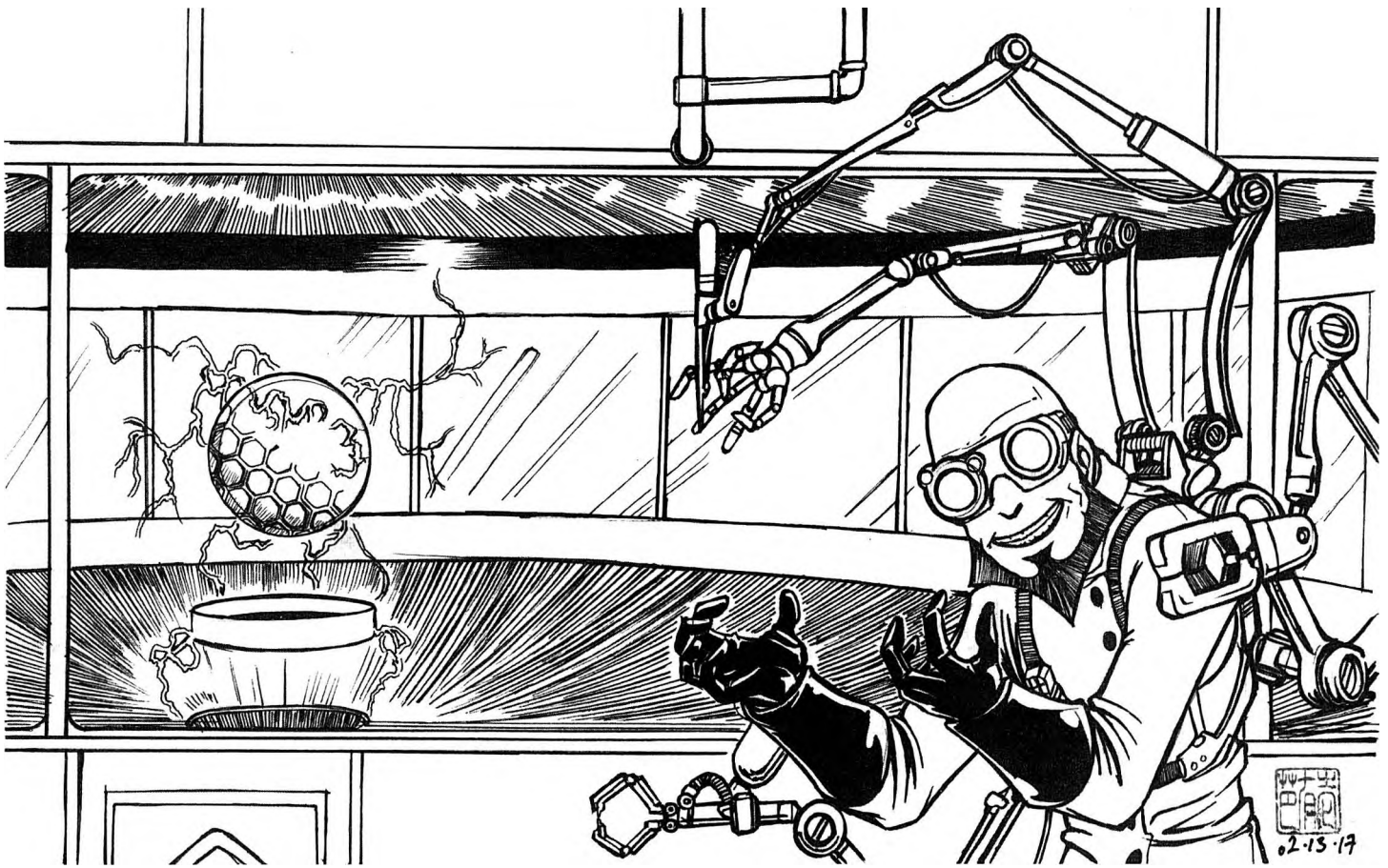
Z-Doktor

Doktor Otto Wonnefremdekinderlachen, Techno-Wizard and disgraced NGR scientist, Chief Research Officer (CRO)

Z-Doktor, called this by most, due to his tongue-twister surname and impenetrable accent, does not talk much about his origins, but most agree that he is a German scientist run out of the New German Republic for experimenting with magic.

The truth is very close. Dr. Otto Wonnefremdekinderlachen (not his real name) did leave the NGR in disgrace, but this was because his work contract with the NGR's RCSG equivalent was drawing to a close. Ranting that his fellow RCSG scientists were either "ley line-addled P.P.E. junkies" or "shortsighted fools," Otto sought out the NGR's underground. He hoped to satisfy his desire for knowledge of the strange energy that people like Victor Lazlo and Erin Tarn called P.P.E. Instead of finding the cadre of rogue, underground scientists, he walked into an NGR sting operation meant to flush out fanatics and criminals.

It would've been far worse if Z-Doktor hadn't held a position in the NGR military. Out of respect for what he had done for the NGR, Otto was stripped of his cushy Triax job and position, was set with heavy fines that nearly bankrupted his family, but (barely) escaped a sentence of imprisonment for life. Though horribly disgraced, he was a free man who decided if the German government was not willing to plumb the depths of his genius, he would do so on his own. After stumbling across a Techno-Wizard weapon during a stint as a pseudo-Operator in Warlord Seriyev's Russian domain, Z-Doktor stole one of Seriyev's famous flying wings and bartered passage to Canada with a visiting Shifter (Valentine).



Otto spent his remaining credits obtaining his education in Techno-Wizardry, being kicked out of two schools in Lazlo before being banned there, and finding less-reputable training grounds to further his education. It is rumored Z-Doktor failed every spiritual and moral metric put before him, not to mention his complete lack of interest in any sort of mysticism and general haughtiness for the superiority of science and logic (he didn't even obtain the skill Lore: Magic until much later – 6th level). All in all, he was unpopular and made enemies wherever he went.

As it happens, the Shifter Valentine, who Rifted the Doktor to Lazlo, saw something in the man, and kept an eye on the interesting German. Valentine always brags that he has an excellent eye for “rare talent.” In time, he would bring Z-Doktor and Hank Acari together, and watch them hatch their scheme for BlueFuture and establish Nowhere.

For his part, Z-Doktor is having the time of his life. Finally free of narrow-minded fools constrained by issue of morality, he has a patron on Hank Acari (and Valentine) who understands his unique vision for new ways to intertwine the disciplines of science and magic, and the freedom to explore to his heart's desire. Z-Doktor only leaves the Think Tank occasionally, spending his time developing interesting new lines of research and testing devices on or near ley lines. From force field generators to magical ray projectors, Z-Doktor is constantly upgrading and testing new prototype weapons and devices when in the field. But he has one particular consuming obsession, and that is *science*.

Meeting him for the first time, many people are off-put by his intimidating presence and rude, outspoken demeanor. Z-Doktor, himself, is physically unassuming, just another aging old scientist consumed with ideas and equations, and no time for people or fun. However, he is distinguished by his youth zeal the modified

ex-rig he wears, enhanced with robotic arms which arch over his own shoulders like the legs of some hideous technological spider. The rig incorporates Techno-Wizardry throughout, and possesses a multitude of mundane and magical capabilities and gadgets. **Note:** In actuality, the rig is a prototype device using the Create Golem spell, an innovation in primitive Techno-Wizard artificial intelligence!

Quick Stats: Z-Doktor

Alignment: Was Principled good, now Aberrant evil in the pursuit of science, and leaning toward Diabolic as he becomes increasingly ruthless.

Attributes: I.Q. 29, M.E. 7, M.A. 15, P.S. 10, P.P. 17, P.E. 13, P.B. 9, Spd 10.

Hit Points: 59 plus 18 S.D.C.

P.P.E.: 163, but his exoskeleton rig has TW batteries that provide him with 800 P.P.E. The rig is powered by a mini-fusion battery, and has 160 M.D.C.

I.S.P.: 72

O.C.C.: 11th level Techno-Wizard and RCSG Scientist.

Disposition: The mad doctor is generally good-natured and even jovial when his work is going well or he is feeling confident. When things are not going his way, he becomes frustrated, grumpy and behaves like an angry, petulant child. Z-Doktor lives for his research and avoids (or destroys) anything or anyone that becomes an obstacle to it. He is always looking for new test subjects and ideas to experiment with. He loves coming up with new, innovate creations. If he thinks it will further his work, Z-Doktor is willing to commit any sort of terrible act. There was a time when he would not want to harm a hair on anyone's head, but he has become increasingly callous and

indifferent to the suffering others since being booted out of the NGR.

Upon learning the spell Sustain, two years ago, Z-Doktor has barely slept a wink, and is unhinged at the best of times. This leads him down dangerous and cruel avenues of experimentation, including the revolting Schrodinger Engine that runs upon life energy and requires constant blood sacrifices, a failed foray into SteelTree cultivation, and his current projects, one, involving Psynetics (the schematics obtained using Telemechanics from captured Brodkil), and another his first foray into understanding Bio-Wizardry using a captured Splugorh Slaver barge.

In combat, Z-Doktor is prone to cackling like a madman while unleashing a new prototype weapon and seems an eternal optimist, always happy to receive new data whether a success or failure. His voice within BlueFuture is always one of innovation, no matter the cost. He leaves any worrying over profits and security to Hank Acari and Erik Belmont. He doesn't like or trust Valentine.

Skills of Note: Language/Literacy Euro 98% and American 80% (but can't shake the accent), and literate in Techno-Can 96%. Has Computer Operation 90%, Programming 80%, and Hacking 60%, as well as a multitude of other high-tech skills such as Electronic Countermeasures 75% and Robot Mechanics 75%, in addition to the other mechanical skills common to all Techno-Wizards. Z-Doktor is also well versed in the other sciences: Biology, Chemistry and Xenology, all at 85%, and has been spending more time on Analytical Chemistry and Astrophysics 75%.

He is also hopelessly addicted to BlueFuture's patented Skill Pills, and takes a daily regimen to give him the equivalent of an M.D. in Cybernetics at 60% and all relevant Medical skills at the same level – he grew tired of people assuming he was 'zat type of Doktor' and then walking out the door. Can install mundane or TW bionics and cybernetics when using Skill Pills. When he runs out and the last effects fade, he suffers an additional -10% to all skills as his mania is aggravated until he can find more – goes into withdrawal for 4D6 days until his mania returns to normal.

Attacks per Melee: Seven, thanks to the robotic appendages of his rig.

Bonuses of Note: +2 on Perception Rolls relating to machines, or magic, or their combination, Critical Strike on a Natural 19 or 20, +1 on initiative, +1 to strike, +2 to parry, +3 to dodge, +2 to roll with impact, +2 to pull punch, +2 to Spell Strength when casting a spell through a mechanical device. +4 to strike with energy weapons. Tentacles are +3 to strike, +4 to parry, and +2 to automatic dodge (the act of dodging does not use up a melee attack), +2 to save vs magic, +2 to save vs possession or mind control, +2 to save vs Horror Factor.

Magic: Z-Doktor does not like casting spells directly even when channeling them through machines. He says, "Ze direct manipulation of P.P.E. is barbaric. One must harness it, ya? Not shove it around like a schoolyard bully." If he does cast manually, he will use the weapons or components of his servo-rig whenever possible.

He knows every spell common to all Techno-Wizards, plus all spells from levels 1-6 and a number of utility spells from levels 7-15 – he's not particularly partial to simple attack magic, but is always interested in diversifying his magi-

cal portfolio. He has even learned some limited Temporal and Necromancy magic, despite the "misguided warnings of limited minds."

Psionics: Machine Ghost (12), Mind Block (4), Object Read (6), Speed Reading (2), Telemechanics (10), and Total Recall (2).

Equipment: Wears a rubbery alien-hide lab coat which has 60 M.D.C. and takes half damage from electricity. Normally carries an assortment of single-use items and prototypes.

Z-Doktor's golem-rig regenerates 1D6 M.D.C. per melee round, except for sensor and weapons systems, which must be repaired as normal. His arms have close combat appendages (silver saw blades that inflict 1D4x10 M.D. and clamps capable of 3D6 M.D. crush/squeeze or 2D6 M.D. from blunt attacks/punches), as well as a host of mechanical, scientific, and medical tools equal to a portable lab or workshop. It also has a force field with three capabilities: *Offense* (Invulnerability, Energy Field, and House of Glass for 5 minutes at a cost of 24 P.P.E.), *Stealth* (Invisibility: Superior, Chameleon, and Aura of Death for 10 minutes, costs 28 P.P.E.), and *Defense* (Armor Bizarre H.F. 16, Impervious to Energy, and Chromatic Protection for 10 minutes, costs 21 P.P.E. per activation). Also incorporates two ray projectors: Electric Arc (3D6 M.D. with a range of 200 feet/61 m), and a TW laser (3D6 M.D. up to 1,200 feet/366 m).

Erik Belmont

Techno-Wizard and former Sergeant-Mage in the Tolkeen Defense Force, COO (Chief Operations Officer)

As his apprenticeship as a Techno-Wizard was about to finish, the outbreak of the Tolkeen War changed the direction of Erik Belmont's life. Although not as well-off as the Acari family, he lived in one of the most advanced, progressive cities on Earth, a jewel of magic and rich culture. He joined the war effort not only to defend and protect his home, but to show the Coalition States how misguided their ways were, and that Tolkeen would stand up for what was right. To take the fight to the Dead Boys!

His idealism didn't last. Over the course of the war, Erik Belmont was field promoted mid-battle during a massacre which claimed the lives of most of his battle group – his quick thinking gave their Shifter enough time to Rift a few of them clear. He was instrumental in the rescue effort to recover the survivors from one of Operation Hardball's concentration camps. It was there that Belmont would lose his black-and-white view of war.

The atrocities committed in those camps burned themselves into his memory, and not just those of the Coalition. Many of the Tolkeenite defense forces that Belmont's team freed were among those consorting with dark forces, to win the war at any cost. The horrors they unleashed on their captors in their escape and later in the *Sorcerers' Revenge*, helped to shatter many of his illusions about who was in the right.

Although he was present for the fall of Tolkeen itself, Belmont concerned himself with helping refugees reach the Lyn-Syrial and Cyber-Knight rescue operations. Then he disappeared into the mercenary life. His travels took him across North America, and at some point, Belmont realized that he didn't relish fighting for credits any more than he did waging war for a supposedly righteous cause.

Now, Belmont holds loyalty to people, not ideas. He sees what BlueFuture is capable of, and the good they could do, which is why he accepted Acari's offer to join them. He believes that the pipeline project could be a huge benefit to the people living in the Pecos Badlands, and Acari's ambitious plan has swayed him. But more than anyone else on the Board of Directors, it is Belmont who understands what will happen if Nowhere makes it on the Coalition's radar.

Whereas Acari is responsible for the grand plans of BlueFuture and Z-Doktor heads up R&D, Belmont spends his time outside the workshop making sure that everything runs smoothly. His primary concern is his people, and often he heads up the establishment of new shipping routes personally or interdimensional scouting parties investigating new markets. He also has the most contact with the leadership of BlueFuture Security; in fact, Acari used Belmont's old mercenary connections to broker their contracts.

Quick Stats for Erik Belmont

Alignment: Unprincipled.

Attributes: I.Q. 19, M.E. 14, M.A. 15, P.S. 12, P.P. 13, P.E. 15, P.B. 13, Spd 12.

Hit Points: 42, plus 26 S.D.C.

P.P.E.: 180

I.S.P.: 59

O.C.C.: 6th level Techno-Wizard who sees himself as a warrior.

Disposition: Slow to trust, but once someone has Belmont's loyalty, he'll go the ends of the earth (or beyond) for them. Unwaveringly dedicated to those he feels responsible for. Not particularly glib or chatty; his time in the field taught him to observe, and he takes a passive role until he thinks his voice is needed. Many soldiers know the cost of war, and so Belmont is not quick to battle – but when he goes to war he does so methodically and without mercy to crush his opponent.

Skills of Note: In addition to the skills common to all Techno-Wizards, speaks American, Euro, and Techno-Can at 90%, and is literate in American 80, has all Mechanical and Electrical skills, Military Etiquette 65%, Pilot: Robots & Power Armor 81%, Pilot: Jet Fighters 70%, Artificial Intelligence 60%, Bioware Mechanics 65%, Whittling/Sculpting 45%, Hand to Hand: Expert, W.P. Energy Pistol, W.P. Heavy M.D. Weapons, and W.P. Spear, all at 6th level.

Attacks per Melee: Five.

Bonuses of Note: +2 to strike, +3 to parry and dodge, +3 to pull punch, +2 to roll with impact, +2 to disarm. Critical Strike on a Natural 18-20 in close combat. +3 to strike with energy pistols or heavy weapons.

Magic: Some Combat Magic including Mystic Invisibility, Invisibility to Sensors, Choking Blast & Dust Cloud, and all invocations from levels 1-4 plus Superhuman Strength, Superhuman Speed, Create Water, Invisibility; Superior, Eyes of the Wolf, Call Lightning, Sustain, Superhuman Endurance, Impervious to Energy, Forcebonds, Apparition, Illusion Manipulation (for holographic displays on TW gear), Barrage, Ley Line Tendril Bolts, Negate Mechanics, Energy Disruption, Disharmonize, Power Bolt, and Teleport: Superior.

Psionics: Machine Ghost (12), Mind Block (4), Object Read (6), Speed Reading (2), Telemechanics (10), and Total Recall (2).

Equipment: Prefers to take modular armor into battle, utilizing removable bracers and leg armor to provide situational

benefits through Techno-Wizard enhancement (Superhuman Speed, Erase Trail, Silence, or combat abilities like Superhuman Strength, Power Bolt, Barrage). Fights with Techno-Wizard short-range weapons like pistols or a personalized Lightning Javelin (4D6 jab or thrown, and when thrown becomes a lightning bolt; H.F. 10, and returns to its sheath), but favors a Starfire Pulse Cannon he acquired in the Tolkeen War and further modified, or field tests new TW grenades using a Wellington WI-GI21 automatic grenade launcher. In close combat, often uses a Lightblade spear and has trained to fight with a small unit of his custom Skelebots in regimental tactics.

Valentine, The Shifter

A secret partner to the Board of Directors

The enigmatic being known as Valentine, and the vast fortune he has seen fit to invest in Hank Acari's vision provided the catalyst for the formation of **BlueFuture Industries**. Having met each of them individually, he saw great potential for Hank's pipeline concept – but felt that BlueFuture could be so much more. A power to one day rival Stormspire in the manufacturing and distribution of Techno-Wizardry across North America. (And with access to a Shifter, even one as busy and constantly mobile as Valentine, their reach could extend much, much further than just this one continent!) Although he stays hands-off, Valentine can be found in the Think Tank from time to time – either providing dimensional coordinates for a new market to sell to, or pulling in a favor from one of the Board. Whatever game the Shifter is playing, at the moment he appears more focused with getting all his pieces into position than actually making a move. Who knows what role BlueFuture plays in his plans?

Remember, Valentine is a benefactor and a risk. There is no shortage of people and inhuman beings who would like to do Valentine harm, and by extension his business operations, friends and associates. Valentines many exploits and wicked nature (Miscreant) has earned him a large and growing number of enemies. Any of whom would take great delight in undermining any of his schemes to get even, including causing grief and stealing from him and his "partners," or killing Valentine and/or his associates.

Odem Mortis

Enemy of Valentine and his associates

The creature known as Odem Mortis may have started life as a human being, a Shifter, but that man died many years ago, reborn as something else. Something evil and terrible. He/it is a force for entropy that likes to kill and seeks the destruction of life. All life. He uses the knowledge and monsters he commands as a Shifter, and his equally favored knowledge of Necromancy to bring sorrow and death wherever he travels.

Though Odem Mortis was hired to find and kill Valentine by another one of his enemies, Mortis has found Nowhere, its pipeline and TW creations fascinating, so he is taking his time. Mortis is particularly interested in the mad genius Z-Doktor. As a result, Odem Mortis makes quiet visits to Nowhere on a regular basis. Watching and hatching his own schemes for the place. Unknown to Acari, Valentine or any of the movers and shakers at BlueFuture Industries, Odem Mortis has already made contact with Z-Doktor and shared ideas with herr Doktor. One can only

assume Mortis is fascinated by the grand design and plans Acari has for Nowhere, and seeks ways to pervert it for the purpose of widespread death and destruction.

Character Note: Odem Mortis is some sort of undead, supernatural creature that is a harbinger of death. Diabolic alignment, 666 M.D.C., Bio-Regenerates 3D6 M.D.C. per melee round, and is the equivalent of an undead, 9th level Shifter and a 9th level Necromancer (knows all Necromancy spells and Bone Magic).

Employees

The staff that perform the day-to-day functions of the company are a varied cross-section of humans and D-Bees, many of whom take great pride in their work and believe themselves to be a part of something greater than themselves. Acari and the Board cultivate this ideal by making sure that BlueFuture employees enjoy a standard of living matched only by the privileged citizens of Lazlo and similar free-thinking communities. Free housing is standard for all employees, assigned by rank (ranging from small apartments in the outer ring, to the cozy cottages and spacious apartments of Desert Meadow, all the way up to the mansions and villas of High Ridge), and many of the amenities are covered by the Company or heavily subsidized for their people. Discounts across the city are common, since BlueFuture likes to grease the wheels everywhere they can. (At least for now – once their profit margins become slimmer and cash is more of an issue, Hank expects that they will have to call in a lot of these favors until their income stream is reliable.)

Districts and City Planning

“The closer you get to the middle of Nowhere, the more green you see. Those canals that run around in circles, so blue they look as artificial as they really are. That’s the secret of Nowhere – a set of rings around an empty shell, a jewel box with nothing to show off once it’s opened. Acari wants you to think that he’s the kind of guy who enjoys a walk in the park, or sitting by the lake and listening to the birds, or a barbeque with good friends. He’s not. The man is a beast, a shark on the prowl for the next bit of meat and nothing more. If he’s walking around Point Plaza, it’s probably because someone cut their thumb an hour ago and he’s smelled the blood. There are no wounded animals in Nowhere – just the healthy predators and the prey they consume.”

- From the book, *“Chasing Nowhere: A Blue Future Red,”* by the Mystic journalist T.H.S. Anagram.

Building over a virtually annihilated tract of land afforded Acari a blank slate to design his very own city, and he took full advantage. He decided to build in a perfect circle outward in every direction, gambling that his newfound Techno-Wizard allies could assist him in supporting the community using the pipeline. So far, the gamble has paid off.

Like spokes of a wheel, straight roads demarcate each concentric ring of the city into sections colloquially known as “districts” or neighborhoods. Moats of fresh, circulated water separate the rings themselves, hosting insects and birds from miles around, drawn to this oasis in the unforgiving Pecos badlands.

Point Plaza

The very center of town is a public park and meeting place, and many of the original cottages that housed the first BlueFuture

employees have been relocated to Desert Meadow, so the open space full of trees and water have room for plenty of people looking to escape the bustle of the rest of Nowhere. This is an open plaza where residents can meet, picnic on the grassy park area, play games (kurjexlis, a popular Three Galaxies game similar to chess, has caught on like wildfire over the past few months), or listen to local musicians. Features a large stage and grandstand for public addresses or performances.

Oldtown

The final remnants of Largo – the old Council Building, and partially destroyed Hall of Justice now form the rustic exterior to the brutalism architecture of BlueFuture’s expansions to both buildings. The sheriff and jail, the courts, and governance all sit in the shadow of the Think Tank.

A reminder that in this town, Hank Acari and the Board control Nowhere’s destiny. The rest of Oldtown is public works, where citizens can get the ear of their councillors and police for matters affecting groups or everyone in Nowhere. The Council building includes offices and administration for every major public service, the Councillors themselves, as well as the public hall where meetings take place once per lunar month.

High Ridge

Most employees of BlueFuture have worked there less than 1 year, but the administrative and managerial workforce has risen stratospherically and gains more responsibility (and power) seemingly by the day. As soon as the second ring of Nowhere was complete, Acari moved the original cottages that had housed this first generation of employees and set them up in larger homes near Oldtown, on an artificially heightened tract of land he calls High Ridge. The status of these managers and executives is reinforced with their beautiful views of the city plaza, the Think Tank, and more. Some enjoy similar houses as in the less-prestigious Desert Meadow, but some (like Hank’s Mind Melter associate) live in mansions with paid or robotic servants.

Desert Meadow

The next echelon of skilled workers are housed in Desert Meadow, the planned community meant to differentiate them from unskilled labor and reward workers who ascend to middle management. Not as nice as High Ridge, but that’s the point – and being close to the entertainment district means that most of the young go-getters are a staple of the party scene. There are many of the simpler cottages and bungalows, as well as lofts and apartment buildings. (Nothing over 3-4 stories, very simple.) There are also small businesses which operate here, mostly general stores and quiet cafes or restaurants.

BlueFuture Quadrant

Although they claim an entire quadrant of the central ring as their Think Tank complex, BlueFuture Industries has built and leases most of the buildings, land and property in the burgeoning city. This includes homes, apartment buildings, warehouses, factories, and storefronts. So far, they are a fair landlord with reasonable, even low, rents. Whether that changes in the future is yet to be seen. Even much of the privately owned land is controlled by

individuals aligned with BlueFuture outright, or in the pocket of Acari or Valentine. If this were exposed, and the Council were to discover how much of the city is really under the company's aegis, it could spark a controversy among those councillors already suspicious and worried about BlueFuture's influence on the community of Nowhere. At some point, the Board may decide that it's time BlueFuture cut out the redundant Council and take direct control of the city via rigged democratic elections for a single president (someone directly under their complete control, perhaps Hank Acari himself), instead of the heavily influenced, but still somewhat independent Council of today.

SkyFarm

The tallest building in Nowhere is the SkyFarm, a vertical farm concept that Hank Acari implemented by collaborating with a rogue scientist who arrived at Nowhere shortly after the reconstruction began. Like most of the inner ring, it is surrounded by lush grass and trees, idyllic scenery broken only by busy gravel roads and the chrome and glass exterior of the farm itself.

SkyFarm utilizes relatively simple Techno-Wizardry systems (Globe of Daylight, Create Water) along with mundane techniques and fertilizers to run 24-hour hydroponics, supplemented and renewed by the Oxbot drones and supervising farmers. So far, the SkyFarm accounts for 58% of all food requirements of the population. Acari has expanded the complex below ground and Cordya refines the efficiency of the existing systems, it is expected that it will increase food production until Nowhere will be near 100% independent and not need to rely on trade with other communities to feed its citizens.

Although BlueFuture has contracted 25% of the floors for their own use (mainly Earthborn or alien crops chosen for their nutritional value and reliable yield, as well as some experimental varieties for R&D), the rest is leased to local farmers who pay a fee for the facilities. Acari subsidized many of the initial takers to encourage newcomers into farming, but many of those leases are now expiring, and BlueFuture intends to let Counselor Cordya make executive decisions on future tenants based on her logistical requirements and ethics.

Crops and grains are moved to warehouses and shipping companies located in the next outermost ring of the city and either distributed to local merchants or shipped elsewhere. One farmer, Dugal Plonk, is quickly becoming famous among the people of Dweomer for his spiced spinach, which is becoming a hot item on the pricier restaurant menus there.

Security at SkyFarm is tight, with a security detail downstairs and another patrolling the floors day and night without fail. The Oxbots have their own underground tunnel to return to the Think Tank's refueling stations, which is protected by several automated turrets (1D4x10 M.D. per laser pulse and 6D6 M.D. for rail gun cannons) and requires electronic security clearance to enter or exit.

Warehouse City

This is the unofficial name for the outer ring district set aside for storage and shipping of goods in and out of Nowhere. Managed by Shipmaster Klepp Averson, all caravans and large shipments must be cleared through here before proceeding to their destination. Smuggling is a constant issue, not the least because

"Klepp the Schlepp," as he is known in circles, doesn't really care about enforcing security unless BlueFuture turns their attention to it. As a consequence, there are alternating periods of lax enforcement interrupted by crackdowns and increased diligence. One of the sections of the city patrolled by BlueFuture personnel.

Factory City

Sections of this quadrant of the outer ring are dedicated to the production of common weapons, robotics, armor and Techno-Wizard items produced by BlueFuture Industries. TW items include many designs copied from other manufacturers, like Flaming Swords or Jammer Pistols. (Designs exclusive to BlueFuture are built on-site underneath the *Think Tank*). Other parts of the district is made up of private shops interests in robotics, power armor, and conventional weapons and armor. Anticipating the next expansion, Acari is considering reaching out to known manufacturers such as *Northern Gun*, *Titan Robotics*, and *Wilk's*. He also plans to make excursions to foreign manufacturers such as *Triax*, *Ichto*, and others to encourage them to do business in Nowhere. How much success he will have with any of them, domestic and abroad, is dubious, given the prejudices towards magic many tech-companies share. Like Warehouse City, this area is patrolled by BF Security.

Other Places of Note

"We'd only just run out of Psi-Cola, but I could already tell that the Shifter was in a bad mood. That crazy bastard's mind is warped to begin with. If he didn't get another bottle soon, things could get ugly. I fished in my pocket for the oponi, but before I'd even unzipped the bag I was blinded by an intense flash of blue light, and he vanished.

"There was no way to be sure how much of this was dimensional anomaly and how much was hallucination, so I stopped trying to keep track. I was staring into the mirror a few minutes or an hour later when I heard a tremendous crash outside. I found the Shifter Valentine sprawled in the street next to a shaking Psi-Cola cart, the same D-Bee vendor we had met in Dweomer. He was rambling to the terrified D'norr about how he would be much happier in Nowhere and not to worry. Another market cornered, another vice to indulge, and another merchant kicking up rent to the Think Tank."

- From the book, "*Chasing Nowhere: A Blue Future Red*," by the Mystic journalist T.H.S. Anagram.

Nowhere features a host of items and services that only places like MercTown or Dweomer can provide. The hope is to make it a destination place for adventurers, mercenary companies and ordinary people alike. Finding TW and magic items, buying or repairing weapons and armor, cybernetics, bionics, or Techno-Wizard items, drinking, entertainment of any variety, and mercenary work can all be had in Nowhere. Game Masters are encouraged to develop your own locations in addition to some of the notable ones presented below!

The Fountain

The pristine white marble structure at the exact center of Nowhere – commonly known as "the Fountain" or "the middle of

Nowhere” – forms the centerpiece of the town common. There is almost always a long line to access the fountain’s basin, and many people wait in line for an hour or longer to refill their *TW batteries* for all the items they power at home. BlueFuture has begun renting pre-charged batteries for just this reason, since they can charge many of them with their own power supply or by teleporting to the closest ley line without taxing their own power systems. The wait has encouraged a number of vendors to sell food, beverages and trinkets here from carts and mobile kiosks, but all such sales are vetted by the Council, and only the most presentable and family-friendly are allowed.

The Think Tank

Alternately known as the campus, headquarters, or complex, the *Think Tank* is a towering edifice of polarized glass and chrome-plated steel. The structure dominates its space, rising up from a dome surrounded by grass, trees, and garden features. The wider outside edge has an area set aside for transport and shipping, where vehicles of all shapes and sizes move almost constantly in and out of the docking bay. Some are laden down with BlueFuture goods, and others are either company employees or contracted for the shipping work.

At the entrance to the BlueFuture Industries district of Nowhere’s core, security gates at the front and rear handle the incoming and outgoing people, vehicles, and cargo that moves in and out of the Think Tank twenty-four hours a day. The front is manned by a human or D-Bee BF Security officer and a modified Northern Gun robot wearing a name tag which reads “Barry.” There are aerial drones and quadrupedal weapons platforms to defend against raiders with heavy Mega-Damage weapons, and the entire facility can be surrounded by a glowing blue force field which protects it with 1,000 M.D.C. and regenerates at a rate of 40 M.D. per minute!

Newcomers are scanned for facial recognition and compared against a database of known bounties and/or intelligence agents, associates of the Federation of Magic, the Coalition, etc.; their aura (general level of experience, presence of magic, psychic abilities low or high, base P.P.E., the presence of a possessing entity, healthy or sick/injured, presence of unusual aberration), chemical profile (via molecular analyzer) and vocal profile are also scanned. Do not submit to the scan, you cannot enter. Only a Board member can allow VIPs entrance without submitting to the scan. Anyone else is turned away and is likely to attract the interest of BF Security (or the Board of Directors).

The bright, open area within is mostly composed of meeting rooms, display booths, and retail space for BlueFuture’s various products. These range from the utilitarian and everyday items (*TW Night Lights* and *Sleep Masks*, which produce an area of darkness to help the night-shift workers sleep during the day or on ley lines, which glow at night), to existing equipment upgrades, to subscription services (recycling rebates for unwanted scrap, monthly P.P.E. battery charging, monthly P3 pipeline service) and more! Sales reps are on hand and ready to ring up products, fill out large orders and arrange shipping, or work out payment plans and/or subscriptions.

Most of the space is all backroom – administrative offices concerned with product orders and logistics, scheduling for subscription renewals or monthly collection (sometimes just teleporting to Gohjjunk or Bonky Heights, but often this means an excursion

to another dimension to collect). The rest is a large hangar and shipping yard where BlueFuture brings their manufactured products up from the subterranean factory floor to ship out across the Megaverse.

The Board meets with important clients and characters in a hanging atrium that floats suspended from the ceiling at the peak of the dome, where every subsection is visible except for the underground production. It is accessible only by a levitation beam pad in the center of the room. The control for this pad is available by remote for Hank, his assistant (8th level administrator with the minor psionic powers of *Mind Block* and *Telekinesis*), and the rest of the Board. It’s mostly a place to show off – the real decisions are made deep underground, in the real complex.

Cretaceous Corner

A plot of land in the Entertainment District is given over to an exciting new attraction, already a hit among visitors and citizens of Nowhere alike. It is a combination zoo, ranch, and amusement park featuring various species of dinosaur found on Earth. Owned and operated by Qualioku Everest, a 9th level Rogue Scientist, with a Shifter named Griz B. Lokhurst (6th level) and Psi-Druid, Yvonne Lopsay (5th level). Species on exhibition include nodosaurs, apatosaurs, tyrannosaurs, raptors, styracosaur, pachycephalosaurs, and many more.

Some of the more tameable species are available for purchase as pets, steeds, work animals or cattle. Cretaceous Corner does a tremendous business in nodosaur meat, both locally and exported elsewhere. Visitors can pay extra to interact with “safe” dinosaurs under supervision and using *TW* devices which utilize *Tame Beast* and/or illusion magic to make sure the animals do not become hostile or panicked.

BlueFuture has an interest in the park and funds Everest’s research into the magical qualities of various dinosaur species. Lokhurst and other personnel will also utilize BlueFuture services to allow the dinosaur herds they maintain trips outside Nowhere to graze and enjoy large, open areas, such as the rolling grassland of North Carolina or the lush South American jungles beyond the Vampire Kingdoms, or even other worlds and dimensions capable of supporting the animals! This cuts down on real estate and costs, since they don’t have to import nearly as much food for the giant creatures’ appetites. Along with the profits from their ranching, Everest’s park has become a resounding success. A day pass is a steep 500 credits per person (children under the age of 11 enter for free), but BlueFuture offers considerable discounts (up to 50%) for employees.

Shaky Helga’s Killshot Emporium

This is a small warehouse on the edge of the Market and the shipping district, run by an ex-Juicer with severe palsy as a result of her detox. Shaky Helga is bitter and resentful of the loss of her Juicer powers, and has attempted suicide on more than one occasion. Opening the Killshot Emporium saved her. In addition to the arms and armor she sells to adventurers, Helga funds and organizes support groups for Juicer wannabes, Juicers entering their Last Call or considering getting out of the game before it happens to them, and ex-Juicers dealing with their post-detox lives. Nowhere’s Juicer population continues to grow, but Helga feels like she’s doing more good now than she ever did as a war-

rior. She sells Wilk's, Northern Gun, Bandito, and CS contraband weapons and ammunition (CS gear is at a 30% markup for the risk). She offers a discount of 10% to any Juicer willing to attend at least one meeting.

Canopy of Dreams

A greenhouse in the style of the SkyFarm, but much smaller. The Canopy of Dreams is owned by a Mystic with Black Market connections named Reese Swellfork. Interestingly, this magician has somehow managed to infuse magical effects into herbs to create narcotics in some peculiar form of Biomancy. He continues to develop new strains of conventional and extradimensional substances, from marijuana and coca plants to oponi and whariffin from the Palladium World, Phreploxish mushrooms from an alien galaxy alongside psilocybin harvested from Earth, and many more. His initial funding came from Valentine, who put him in touch with Hank Acari and brokered a patronage between the two.

Many obscure and home brewed liquors, drugs, herbs, and antidotes (from the **Palladium Fantasy RPG®** or various **Rifts®** World Books) can be found here, or procured on short order; perhaps at a discount if the buyer is an adventurer willing to help Reese acquire difficult ingredients. As an adventurer himself, Reese is not always in town. Rather than shut the store when he is gone, he has a Northern Gun administrator robot conduct simple business, and his BlueFuture connections make sure no trouble finds his door.

The Body Shop Nightclub

Many in Nowhere said this nightclub would fail in its first month. A strip club featuring only cybernetically reconstructed dancers? No way. However, it has proved to be an instant hit with both the locals and adventurers, especially Headhunters, and is become a staple of the tourist circuit. Some performances are elegant burlesque and far different than the stereotypical sleazy affair most expect; one troupe of Tolkeen refugees, all dancers with various amputations as a result of the war, are practically high culture. Cyborgs with difficulty adjusting to their prosthetics often come to the Body Shop Nightclub for comfort, but many more come for a drink and a good time. The owner is a Russian immigrant named Katya Zee, a ballerina turned partial conversion cyborg, and who claims to be a time traveler from the Rifts. She is a sharp wit and ruthless in negotiations. Rumor has it she may be an ex-assassin or spy.

Never Grow Up, Never

NGUN is the brainchild of Hartijax Fin, a youthful Techno-Wizard with big ideas. By applying spells in the TW construction of computer systems, Hartijax (or "Harty," as he prefers to be called) has created the first commercial Techno-Wizard video games. Hank Acari has made offers to buy him out and fold his business into BlueFuture, but Harty relishes his independence and has refused his offers.

This arcade is all gaudy lights and music, and features a selection of games for patrons of all ages. Utilizing Astral Projection, Ensorcel, and a variety of illusion magic, some games fully immerse players into a virtual reality experience. Others are more grounded, using toned-down combat spells to create games of

skill akin to skeeball or whack-a-Dead-Boy. Harty also has conventional video games, including pre-Rifts arcade machines and software recovered from the ruins of the Great Cataclysm. Security outside is handled by a single Mystic who sweeps newcomers for supernatural evil, powerful magic, and scans their futures using Oracle or Clairvoyance to see if they *will* be trouble. But this place is rarely rough and relies on the local militia to sort out other problems. Price per game ranges from 5-100 credits, and there are always 4D4 minute lines for most games at this 24-hour establishment.

Cinnamon Cloud House

Catering to the rich and elite of Nowhere, this fine bar and restaurant has a pricey menu – nothing less than 50 credits, and many dishes range up to 100 per plate. Drinks are also expensive, twice as much as anywhere else (usually that means 10-20 credits per drink). It's clean and quiet, styled as a mansion renovated into a restaurant. The cook has a molecular analyzer implant, sensor hand, and the chemistry and art skills in addition to the cooking skill, and his food makes this a must-visit destination for tourists with credits to burn.

Owned by Yrtle Winnebago, a freeborn Dog Girl who secretly wishes she could return to the land of her parents' birth and open a restaurant in Chi-Town (she thinks Dog Boys/Girls are equal to human citizens there). She enjoys being in the front of house greeting new guests – her sensory abilities help her security (two combat cyborgs and a major psychic mercenary soldier) keep tabs on any troublemakers who come by.

Ro Bitz, Body Chop Shop

The premier Body Chop Shop in the city, this clean and well-lit establishment offers cybernetic and bionic conversion, M.O.M. implants, and most commonly available varieties of Juicer conversion. Mama Ro, the 13th level Cyber-Doc who runs the place, is looking for a Techno-Wizard to join her staff so she can offer Dragon Juicer and Ultra-Crazy conversions, but has not been able to find one yet. Hank is stalling on this front, since Z-Doktor has proposed an initiative to start offering BlueFuture TW Crazy and Juicer conversions based on his own designs, but is still in the prototyping phase. Mama Ro is starting to get nervous that soon, she'll be pushed out of the Market both figuratively and literally.

Brainz X Changed

A large tent in the Market features a team of a Mind Bleeder, Mind Melter, and Mystic who swap skills and alter identities for a price. This is not true mind-swapping, but use of the spells Instill Knowledge and Compulsion (often Mask of Deceit), along with the psionic powers of Mind Bond, Mind Wipe, Alter Memory, and others. The effect is that customers get to pretend to be someone else, including knowing skills and languages they normally did not. A novelty, but one that many are willing to pay for. Costs 100 credits to swap for an hour, 1,000 credits for a day (the effects will wear off within 24 hours whether they return to the tent or not). They also do a lucrative business investing would-be infiltrators with the inside info they need by way of implanting maps, sentry routes, passwords, and military etiquette directly into the mind. This is much more expensive (10,000 to 100,000

credits!) and frequently requires a person from which the information or skills can be copied.

Rowboats and Robots

This large machine shop topped by an inflatable rowboat crewed by a deactivated Triax Dyna-Bot is the go-to Operator's shop in Nowhere. Although there are others in the city, and they are cheaper (10% less than the prices listed in the Rifts Ultimate Edition), the experience and skill of Ghang Vinutchin Lee, a six-limbed D-Bee Operator (14th level!) speaks for itself. Ghang has a team of 10 (ranging from 3rd to 8th level Operators) and their assistants. They also sell refurbished body armor and power armor from any major North American manufacturer, and have a Northern Gun Blocker robot for sale at 10% off the listed price.

From Parts Unknown

The largest magic shop in town, owned and operated by a mated pair of D'Norr (a Tolkeen Artifact Hunter variant Shifter and an Alchemist, both 6th level) specializing in alchemist items (as per the Palladium World traditions), as well as magic items from the various cultures of Rifts Earth and, some say, other worlds. They also carry Techno-Wizard items, as do other merchants in the city, but most try to avoid competing with BlueFuture's extensive catalogue.

Vitamin Alley

Although this run-down dive bar claims their drinks are all "healthy," they are simply alcoholic beverages with normal multi-vitamins stirred in. Fights are common, and the place features two cages – one for scheduled fights, and one for settling grudges (both are heavily bet on and the house takes bets up to 10,000 credits). Run by a 9th level Crazy named Mister Clean (hypochondriac and obsessive-compulsive with an emphasis on health and cleanliness) with a second personality: Bingo, the gladiator cage-fighting champion and currently undefeated (possesses a Rune sword that inflicts 1D6x10 M.D., has all sensitive and physical psionic powers plus Telekinetic Force Field, Pyrokinesis, and Psychic Omni-Sight, along with 110 I.S.P.) in the cage.

The Ale Hows

It seems like this small establishment is almost going out of its way to be the stereotypical adventurer's bar. Gambling tables, cheap drinks, and televised events go all night and there are rooms upstairs for those who can't or won't go home to stay the night. In fact, it *is* too stereotypical – the owner, Bob Smith, is a Splugorth agent (minor psychic, Bio-Wizard M.D.C. transformation and 50 M.D.C., but no other special powers) whose job is to spy on the goings-on at Nowhere and report back once a month. Bob frames these trips as 'stocking the shelves' and always returns from his travels with a large number of new and exotic liquors for sale (in fact, he pays for teleportation to the closest ley line nexus and then contacts his High Lord handler for transport to and from Splynn). Valentine and the Board of Directors are aware of the man's loyalties and sometimes feeds him disinformation.

Moving Flicktures

The premier movie house in Nowhere, this large building has 10 screens and a rotating schedule of movies. They play pre-Rifts films including the popular Julian Amici series, as well as newer films coming out of Lazlo, Dweomer, New Lazlo, Ishpeming, and other free states. The last Saturday of every month is Prosek Popcorn Night, where all screens play Coalition propaganda (sometimes heavily edited to mock or discredit the CS) and viewers are encouraged to curse, shout, laugh, and throw popcorn at the screens. Prices are usually 5-10 credits a film, but special events may be as much as 50 credits. The owner and manager is an 8th level Rogue Scholar named Analisa Speelborg. She has a cybernetic camera and video recorder in place of her left eye and a directional mic in her left index finger (plus a concealed ion rod in her right leg, 3D6 M.D., 600 feet/182 m range, 10 shots).

The Ring

A huge warehouse at the edge of the entertainment district, close to the shipping district. For those visitors itching to get into a fight, this establishment allows them to vent their impulses without damaging public or private property. Upon entering, a concessions stand and bar opens up into stadium-like stands surrounding a number of closed-off arenas and a racetrack. Betting is fast and loose, and the house takes bets up to 50,000 credits! There are fights day and night, some booked in advance and others open to new entries right up until 5 minutes prior to the start of the match. Fighters may participate in single bouts or teams up to 4 strong on each side. A 7th level Ley Line Walker manages the staff and provides magic scrolls for defensive effects (Wall of Not to make existing M.D.C. walls invisible, or Impenetrable Wall of Force for open arenas) and many members of the security staff are psychics or spell casters looking for trouble (unauthorized fighting, cheating, gamblers attempting to affect the outcome of fights, etc.) – most who come in here know not to get management annoyed with them when they're surrounded by violent adventurers and brawlers. Other events include Juicer Football, Murderthon, Deadball, and more. **Note:** Secretly owned by Z-Doktor, who uses the corpses from any fatalities for creating ritual zombies and other nefarious uses for dead flesh.

Worth Every Credit

This is a middle-of-the-road bar and eatery that isn't too violent and attracts mostly trade workers, laborers, administrators, and the occasional adventurer. The fare is homely, featuring a lot of comfort food, and reasonably priced (5-20 credits a plate). They have a breakfast buffet every morning from 9 to 11 and all-you-can-eat shblorg night on Fridays. (**Note:** Shblorgs are small alien creatures similar to armored shrimps that are cooked in-shell and then cracked open to eat. Think a tiny lobster tail.) Neither buffet is open to D-Bees known for their appetites, nor Juicers or any other high-metabolism characters. The owner is Crank Yagermister, an immigrant from the kingdom of Worth who maintains his family's proud culinary history.

Townspeople of Note

Dreekin Meyer

Sheriff of Nowhere

An honest and ethical man ignorant of the backdoor dealings that swirl behind his back, this aging lawman is a moral center guiding the Nowhere citizenry. Meyer was devastated by the loss of so many of the people he had sworn to protect (in fact, he gained a phobia of losing any more of the survivors and keeps a fatherly eye on them). He has desperately latched onto BlueFuture as the means to keep something like that from ever happening again.

He acts as a liaison between the Council-led government and BlueFuture's private security forces. They consult when monsters or bandits try to attack the city – usually, BF Security knows about such attacks first via TW sensors or scouts, but the militia is better at keeping its ear to the ground for rumors among the traders and traveling adventurers in the area. Since the expansions, Meyer is also lending his experience to training a volunteer militia of defenders. He's got several dozen (2D6+30) already at 1st-3rd level and another 4D6 well on their way. (12th level lawman, P.P. 20, prefers a Wilk's Judgement Day laser rifle and owns a real Winchester loaded with silver bullets.)

Initially, Hank Acari viewed the idealistic sheriff as a nuisance, but Meyer has since won him over. Although he had hoped to keep BF Security as the sole armed force in the city, the militia keeps an eye on visitors who go around armed and armored, start fights, and the other low-level interactions of policing. They are also no threat to his well-trained mercenaries wielding the best conventional arms and TW equipment BlueFuture can provide.

Sholeh Ksor Lamm Delta

a.k.a. "Sholeh Dealio," Telepath and Merchant

This kind-hearted D-Bee, her skin covered in hair-like antennae, is a master of reading people. Her sensitivity to a multitude of biological factors (temperature, breathing, voice patterns) combined with her telepathic and empathic abilities make her a negotiator without peer. She runs a small shop in the Market, *Madame Know-It-All*, where she will read futures and provide other psychic services such as healing or exorcism. Acari has been known to call upon her to act as a lie detector during negotiations, but rarely does so anymore to avoid Sholeh ascertaining his own lies, instead relying on Yousef or other unscrupulous psychics.

Arkling of Soros

Ice Dragon Hatchling

A boisterous blowhard, this young dragon (only 113 years old) is the self-described Voice of Nowhere, a popular radio show with close to 5,000 listeners. She's a divisive figure, since her main message is the superiority of dragons to all other sentient beings. The reason she gets so many listeners is partially because of the large D-Bee population, who agrees with her insistence of what she calls a 'primate-bias' among Nowhere's government. Her small station, ICED, plays a wide variety of music the rest of the time, from Rifts Earth and others that Arkling has visited, and

there are other talk shows besides her own. (Binary Blitz, some City Rat's idea of a joke and just an hour a day of terrible jokes in jarring Techno-Can code, and Called It, a phone-in show where the psychic host uses Clairvoyance and Remote Viewing to read the 'skeins of fate' about his listeners. Along with way too many cold and ice-based puns for any rational being to tolerate.)

Zhang Tao

Psi-Stalker and Hunter

Native to mysterious Rifts China, this pale-skinned warrior is a drunk who spends much of his time at The Ale Hows smashed on alcohol and Psi-Cola (Bob has mixed a special drink for him that he calls "Zhang Tang") and halfheartedly snarls at anyone with magical or psionic abilities, or rambling about his homeland. He isn't much of a warrior anymore, but is still a talented hunter (12th level civilized Psi-Stalker) and is known for taking rich hosts on 'safari' where they can bag a supernatural creature. He has a deal with a Shifter in the Market who will transport him and his hunting party for 10,000 credits a person – along with a scroll of Dimensional Teleport for their return trip (50,000 credits per scroll). He splits the profits of each safari with the Shifter right down the middle – they often make more from the journey than the hunt!

E.R. Rutger

Vagabond and Man About Town

A common sight on the less-savory streets in the outer districts is this disheveled human. Rutger's claim to fame is a bounty on his head in almost every North American kingdom and many more in other dimensions, and is constantly fending off would-be collectors looking to get a big payday. (Bounties range from 10,000 to 250,000 credits – G.M.s, use your imagination as to the charges.) He is a despicable cutthroat and thief, and will do any dirty job if it suits him. He travels much of the time, but has a room in one of the less-reputable apartment buildings owned by BlueFuture that he frequents when in Nowhere. Often accompanied by Gary, his zombie servant, who wears an ill-fitting black suit, hat, and sunglasses along with a fake moustache stapled to his upper lip.

G.M. Note: Rutger is secretly an agent of Valentine the Shifter and has been augmented with a Chest Amalgamate and Zembahk appendage, which he keeps concealed whenever possible. If he is killed or disappears, the Shifter will definitely come looking for those responsible, he has raised his unscrupulous hatchetman from the dead on more than one occasion.

Lordla Starghost

Mystic

A dimensional traveler from another galaxy, this D-Bee Mystic came to Earth years ago and has traveled the continent of North America in search of a place to call home. Instead, he found Nowhere. The burning optimism has infected Starghost, and he has decided to stay here and embrace the flow of the Megaverse, believing that Hank Acari's boasts of a blue energy revolution will help mend the fractures between those who use magic and those who fear it. He is a warrior for justice, and considering whether

he would feel comfortable as the new Sheriff of Nowhere when Dreekin Meyer is too old to continue his duties. Starghost hopes that this will not be for some time, and although his wanderlust has temporarily subsided, he is always ready to drop everything for a just cause. He will get more than he reckoned for when the Minion War erupts on North America.

Nowhere Military & Defenses

“Belmont’s got that dead-eyed look, the one you see on a lot of Tolkeen vets. That was an awful bastard of a war, and the scars run deep in the flesh and spirit and mind and everything between. Still, you can tell he’s there, at the surface, not retreated into himself like some of the others. The hard-bitten Sarge thing is not an act, but he’s got heart for the people in his command. When he talks, he sounds like someone who fought for freedom, not for revenge. Out of the three of them, I’m glad he’s the one in charge of keeping BlueFuture safe and secure. Let that German whacko cobble together whatever abomination he’s cooking up in his lab, let Acari try and get his name onto the lips of the Emperor of Pecos, let Valentine gamble lives for whatever immortal destiny he’s after. If you want to know who I’d trust to watch my back, give me the person who cares more about being free than being part of a movement.”

- From the book, *“Chasing Nowhere: A Blue Future Red,”* by the Mystic journalist T.H.S. Anagram.

The Techno-Wizardry which fuels life in Nowhere is also the linchpin of its defensive network. There are the conventional defenses shared by many kingdoms of Rifts Earth (high defensive walls, radar capable of detecting aircraft hundreds of miles away and other technological sensors, gun emplacements, and missile batteries), which do not require P.P.E. to activate – Hank and the Board have learned the lessons of Tolkeen and believe in hedging their bets when it comes to relying on either magic, technology, or even Techno-Wizardry too heavily. But the main strength of Nowhere is its ability to use a constant flow of P.P.E. to power its magical defenses – when the city becomes the target of Simvan raids or a Pecos war band, any TW manufacturing halts to direct all available energy to the defense network.

The circular design of the city is not just for the ease of planning and expansion – each ring of the city incorporates TW defenses in its walls, and the water separating the inner plaza and the first ring of the city is intended to prevent vampires from crossing from one section to another. Although the walls typically use a Chameleon effect to appear as clear glass, this effect can be turned on or off from the Think Tank’s Command Center.

The actual defense forces, not counting the civilian militia, is composed of several mercenary companies operating on BlueFuture’s payroll. Acari prefers mercenaries for his troops, and using more than one outfit promotes healthy competition among the hired soldiers. They are paid well and content for the moment; 3,000 credits a month, 20% discount on BlueFuture items and at many locations in the city, and enjoy free allocated housing the same as BlueFuture employees – low scale for grunts up to High Ridge mansions for the commanders. Their weapons and armor

are ultimately up to the mercenary companies themselves, but they may be given access to a variety of conventional and TW weapons and gear on a mission-by-mission basis. They also have access to a few flying power armor, Sky Cycles, hovercycles, and a couple of APCs.

At each ring of the city’s walls there are only a few entrances, all of which are heavily guarded. There are lockers where the mercs can store weapons, armor, or devices not allowed inside that area of Nowhere. There are also vehicle depots located just inside the entrances capable of storing military vehicles, robots, and power armor suits. Prices are affordable – 10 credits a day for weapons and armor, 50 credits a day for vehicles, robots, or power armor. If a visitor or “freelance employer” (merc) is able to obtain a special VIP pass, they may be allowed to wear body armor and carry whatever weapons they wish, at the discretion of BF Security. Such passes are only issued by top BlueFuture Industries board of directors and head of security to special personnel and visiting VIPs.

In the outer district, weapons are limited to pistols or close combat weapons, and only the lightest of body armor is tolerated; body armor raises eyebrows and may alert security to investigate. Rifles, shotguns, heavy weapons, and medium to heavy body armor are not permitted and result in militia or BF Security questioning the individual(s) and advising them of the law. A second warning is a night in jail, and a third is expulsion or death if the individuals do not come along quietly.

In the inner ring, including *the Fountain and Point Plaza*, no weapons or armor are permitted. Violations of this law may result in a week in jail and a 10,000 credit fine, to a year in a Ley Line Time Capsule. Three violations are likely to result in expulsion or death.

Since some cyborgs and D-Bees are tough and strong, and many mages and psychics have Mega-Damage offensive and defensive capabilities, they are watched closely and may not have free access to some locations. One quarter of the militia and BF Security are psychic, and many of those are Sensitives possessing any or all of the See Aura, Sense Magic, Sense Psionics, or Sense Evil powers. Many citizens are also law abiding and conscientious, as well as seeing a higher incidence of psychic potential (about a full third as opposed to a quarter of the population), and they report anything suspicious or dangerous to the militia or BF Security.

Typical BF Security Squad

2-6 Grunts or Mercenary Soldiers (average level is 3rd-6th).

1 Military Specialist (4th-6th level).

1 Master Psionic or spell caster; typically a Mind Melter, Burster or Zapper, Mystic, or Ley Line Walkers, 3rd-5th level.

1 Gun Golem (equivalent to an iron golem as per the Create Golem spell, equipped with conventional a energy weapon or rail gun and a targeting computer array. The golem itself is programmed to take orders only from a commander possessing a paired circlet which integrates a radio headset; 5 mile (8 km) range.

1-4 modified CS Skelebots or DV-12 Dyna-Bots.

Standard Equipment: A mix of energy and kinetic M.D. weapons, some of which may include TW gear. When a BF Security unit is expected to operate on a ley line for any length of time, they are issued TW Line Blasters, equal to a single shot from the

modified Skelebots designs below. All close combat weapons are silver-plated.

Ironwood Robots

(Built from Skelebots or Dyna-Bots)

The stolen Skelebots have been “skinned,” as it were, according to Erik Belmont’s own design using his Whittling & Sculpting skill, and covered in wood enchanted with the Ironwood spell, making them seem like strange marionettes bristling with TW gear. Belmont considers this an upgrade. Coalition troopers destroy the strange looking robots on sight, but have not yet realized they are often rebuilt Skelebots or that they originate from Nowhere. The reskinned robots fool everyone from a distance, however if taken apart and examined by a Cyber-Doc, Operator or other robot expert, the ruse is likely to be discovered: -30% to Mechanical Engineer, Robot Mechanics, or Technophile skill. The internal P.P.E. battery allows the robots to use simple TW weapons, and the ‘bots have been reprogrammed to obey BF Security officers and fight the CS and other enemies.

Quick Stats for Ironwood robots

(rebuilt and reprogrammed FASSAR-20 Skelebots or DV-12 Dyna-Bots)

Attributes: 7-8 feet (2.1 m) tall, weigh 300-400 lbs (135-180 kg) due to reduced weight of wooden armor.

150 M.D.C.

Robot P.S. 30.

Brains and programming roughly equal to a standard FASSAR-20, reprogrammed.

Internal TW P.P.E. battery has 400 P.P.E. for TW weapon systems.

Attacks per Melee: Four.

Bonuses of Note: +2 to strike with energy weapons, +5 on an aimed shot, +4 to strike with Vibro-Blades or hand to hand attacks, +5 to parry with arms, +7 to parry with Vibro-Blades, +4 to parry or dodge attacks from behind, +2 to roll with impact or fall, Critical Strike on a 19 or 20. Impervious to poison, gas, biological agents, psionics, mind control, charms, and Bio-Manipulation.

Sensors and Communication Systems: Telescopic optics with a two mile (3.2 km) range, multi-optics have a range of 3,000 feet (914 m). Radar tracks up to 12 targets at a range of 2 miles (3.2 km) at 500 ft (12 m) or higher. Motion detector scans a 100 foot (30.5 m) radius, directional radio has a 10 mile (16 km) range and each possesses 5 Magic Pigeon mortar shells – push a button, report up to 30 words, and a pigeon launches from the mortar as per the spell – each is a single use item that does not cost P.P.E. to use. Each also has a Mystic Alarm chamber within their torso that ruptures when destroyed, notifying their command center of their destruction even if in another dimension. A secondary Mystic Alarm chamber can be intentionally destroyed by the robot to signal for evacuation.

Weapon Systems: Two silver-plated Vibro-Blades concealed in the forearms, dealing 2D6 M.D. A punch deals 1D6 M.D. and the knuckles are also silver-plated. Each carries a rail gun (6D6 M.D. per 40 round burst, 4,000 feet (1,220 m) range, backpack drum contains 2000 rounds) or variable laser rifle (3D6 M.D. per shot or 6D6 triple-pulse, finds correct frequency in 1D4

melee rounds, 2,000 feet/610 m range; tied to conventional internal power supply).

TW Ley Line Systems: 1. When on a ley line, the radio of each Ironwood Robot can send or receive from anywhere on the line as per the Ley Line Transmission spell, for no P.P.E. cost.

2. Each has a pair of shoulder blasters which function only on ley lines (using the Ley Line Tendril Bolts spell) – a single shot inflicts 2D6+10 M.D., a double blast is 4D6+20 M.D. Range: 2,400 feet (700 m) and an unlimited payload that is ONLY available when on a ley line.

Additional TW Systems: The robot is also equipped with any one of the following (at 5th level proficiency):

a) Magic Net launcher (60 foot/18 m) range, enemy must dodge 16 or higher, costs 10 P.P.E. per shot).

b) An Energy Field generator, and as per the spell, can shield 1-2 robots or personnel, at a cost of 10 P.P.E. per use.

c) A chameleon field as per the Chameleon spell. It effects only the robot with the ability and lasts for 15 minutes. Costs 15 P.P.E. per activation.

d) A lightning blaster. 6D6 M.D. per single blast, 1,200 foot (366 m) range for a cost of 48 P.P.E. Duration: Once activated, the weapon can fire as often as four times a minute for four minutes.

May also carry P.P.E.-Clip versions of any TW weapon as a knock-off manufactured by BlueFuture.

Pecos Gang Leaders and Other Groups in the Nowhere Area

The Psi Stallone and the Dead Stars (a.k.a. the Party Brigade): Caravans in the vicinity have been harassed by a new group of well-organized bandits based somewhere in the area. Striking in highly coordinated attacks, they hit hard and disappear with only the most valuable loot. These raids often leave confused survivors in their wake, but several attacks on smaller, traveling groups of adventurers have not been so lucky.

The leader of these bandits is a 6th level Psi-Stalker (Psi-Slinger) who goes by the name Psi Stallone. A vicious cutthroat and murderer, Stallone is infamous for his hatred of the Coalition and demons/Deevils, and has been sighted leading his group against these forces when they enter his territory. This has only intensified with the onset of the Minion War on Earth – although the Pecos Badlands are not rich in ley lines, land forces must travel through them and the Vampire Kingdoms to reach the magically saturated kingdoms further south, and Stallone does his best to make sure the minions of Hades and Dyval pay for every step they take, bleeding small expeditionary groups in hit-and-run raids and nudging them north into Lone Star in hopes that the Dead Boys will finish them off.

In fact, it might seem that Stallone and his crew do more to protect Nowhere than terrorize it, and this is for good reason. The bitter Psi-Slinger and Hank Acari have a common acquaintance – namely, the Shifter Valentine. Stallone’s job is very simple – to drive other bandit groups, Coalition scouts, and supernatural menaces out of Nowhere’s vicinity. Hank will also call on the leader of the Dead Stars to harass and destroy caravans of competitors traveling to or from his city, or even just undesirables and troublemakers that he’d like to see eliminated.

They are fewer in number than the other gangs; only 4D6+12 at any given moment, but are more elite and specialized (Stallone

has a tendency to murder the inept). Colors are jet black with a white star painted somewhere on their armor, and war paint mimicking a skull. They have access to light or medium armor and mostly use Northern Gun or Naruni gear (Valentine is a minor shareholder in Naruni via his Phase World broker). Vehicles are almost always hovercycles, with some light hovercraft held in reserve for moving large loot from battles.

The B4 Corpses: This motley crew of suicidal maniacs operate in an inhospitable stretch of wasteland contaminated by a photosynthetic alien fungus which they have learned to distill into a potent brew they call *Anti-Dead*. The drug makes them almost completely immune to pain, similar to the Juicer, and they can fight up to -20 Hit Points! The drug also and virtually eliminates their fear of death (+10 to save vs Horror Factor). The effects are on all the time when the brew is consumed every other day. They are lead by creature called the *Bone Collector*, a C'ro Demon Mage (see **Rifts® Sourcebook: Mindwerks**) who uses magic to raise the dead members of the gang into zombie servants or as the more limited animated dead. Dulled by the Anti-Dead elixir and swayed by the demon's promises of immortality, the B4 Corpses always reclaim their fallen whenever possible, so that they can "live forever" as mindless animated dead that serve the Bone Collector.

They number 6D6+20 with another 4D6+24 animated dead and 1D4+6 zombies. Their colors are red with yellow stripes, similar to the coloring of the C'ro species, and their icon is a Demogogian character meaning "endless." Preferred vehicles are trucks and cars, since it is easier to transport zombies and loot. Such vehicles can even be piloted by the ritualized undead when necessary.

Free Agents of Pecos: The name of this bandit crew is actually a sick joke, since each and every one of them is in fact in thrall to a powerful Mindolar demon (see **Rifts® Conversion Book 3: Dark Conversions**) called *Tsulkgulsa*. In the dread language of demons, its name means "The Screams of Those Trapped Within." *Tsulkgulsa* has become aware of a rival Mindolar in the area (see the Gohjjunk article in **The Rifter® #76**) and is determined to outdo its competitor. As such, it will disguise its minions as travelers in order to spy on the goings-on at Nowhere and plans attacks based on superior intelligence, often aided by astral projection to better understand what the Free Agents will be going up against. The gang is notorious for "recruiting" their defeated enemies to join them, and have a reputation for mercy. This causes many of those who come under attack to consider surrender as an option, not realizing the slavery which awaits them. All the better for the Mindolar, since when the Free Agents return to the demon's lair with their prisoners, it's only a matter of the disgusting slug-thing's mind-controlling bite to swell the ranks of the gang.

The Mindolar can control up to 200 humanoid mortals, but the Free Agents are currently only 4D6+40 strong. The demon keeps another four mind controlled Brodkil and a Ley Line Walker in its lair for defense and constructing magic items for its growing army. Eventually it wants only the top ranks to be dominated directly, controlling a larger number of dupes underneath them. They wear no colors, since the dominated minions have no trouble discerning their own through the Mindolar's influence (and the fact that the demon frequently observes and telepathically directs attacks in astral form). Equipment is poor, mostly cobbled-together armor and low-grade energy weapons, but have

access to many enchanted weapons, amulets, talismans of Armor of Ithan, or other useful magic from scrolls, thanks to the *Tsulkgulsa's* Line Walker servant.

The Laughing Ones: This crew of *Gremlins* (see **Rifts® Dark Conversions** for complete stats) escaped from a dimension of constant strife where they held a precarious position as the de facto armorers and weaponsmiths for warring tribes of Brodkil who hunted ragtag bands of humans through the ruins of a shattered global civilization not unlike the Golden Age of Earth. The mischievous sub-demons had carved themselves a niche, allying themselves with no one warband but offering their services to all of the major tribes. A group of them, fancying themselves liberators of the demonic proletariat, have established a cadre of human and D-Bee warriors who take orders from their diminutive masters. Obsessed with equality, the Gremlins have constructed a sort of communistic enclave that shares their resources, whether it be mortal slaves or captured technology, and at the moment, are wondering whether they could get away with bartering their services to Pecos communities. (Hank is intrigued by their presence near Nowhere, and Z-Doktor is considering leading a research expedition to round up these techno-terrors and put them to good use in his experiments and see if they could bolster manufacturing.)

The Gremlins number close to a hundred, with another 6D6x10 slaves and servants, but do not leave their underground dwelling except to scavenge what other gangs leave behind after skirmishes in the area or to acquire new slaves. They are intrigued by Nowhere, Gohjjunk, and any other instance of junk salvage or mechanical ingenuity. If possible, they would like to infiltrate some of their number into Nowhere to see what's going on in the city of mortals. They wear cloaks of black, with one red sleeve, and this pattern is repeated on the armor of their slave-warriors. Although their forces use mostly scrap weapons and armor, they are well-maintained, and even boast two suits of Samson armor in addition to a host of junky cars, trucks, and motorcycles.

The Rattestaff Tribe: This large group of wild Psi-Stalkers keep to themselves, trading with the local Pecos communities from time to time, but the bustle of Nowhere has brought them into contact with more people as of late. They aren't entirely xenophobic, but do not trust outsiders except if proven allies in battle. Such Scalefriends are offered tattooing to match the scaled designs favored by the tribe, and will be recognized as such by any Rattlestaff tribal. Their leader, Silent Fang, has killed over a dozen Baal-Rogs since the Minion War came to their world. Numbering almost 200, they send out raiding parties of 4D6 to hunt supernatural creatures in the wastes or on trade missions. Use mostly Ostrosaurus or other dinosaurs for mounts and for armor, but love Vibro-Blades and plasma weapons.

The Star Pack Tribe: A peaceful presence in the Pecos Badlands if there ever was one, this tribe of Psi-Stalkers maintains a strict neutrality amongst all peoples. They don't care about the squabbles between the Coalition and the free peoples, nor the Federation of Magic, or any other. Their legends speak of a time of waiting, where they must watch the sky for the coming of a great leader. They breed a higher instance of Psi-Nullifiers in their children, which they believe is a sign of favor, and those who decide to follow the path of the Cyber-Knight are viewed as pilgrims hunting for their lost savior. Number only 75+3D6, and only send out hostile parties to destroy interlopers and attack-

ers – but those parties are almost always a full war effort, with up to three-quarters of the tribe riding to battle. Favor horses and low technology, but do maintain high technology that they repair using Telemechanics when possible, and trade for repairs when they cannot.

Hook, Line, and Sinkers for Nowhere & the Surrounding Area

Fear and Ley Line Loathing

Hook: A strung-out Mystic named Anagram hires the adventurers to protect him while he investigates some ruins currently being excavated on the outside of the walls, where the next phase of Nowhere is under construction. He can only pay 10,000 credits each, but promises that there is gold and artifacts in the ruins that could fatten their wallets. Anagram wants to know why Acari has closed off this area of the excavation for study, and is chasing visions of the Apocalypse being known as Death and supernatural evil at play. He will indulge in numerous substances and a steady regimen of Psi-Cola, and may prove as much a hindrance as a useful participant in any combat.

Line: Unfortunately, Mortis has a Doppelganger (3rd or 7th level Shifter, a vampire as per the Return from the Dead spell, with a supernatural link to Death) also investigating the ruins, and the magical duplicate has unleashed his demonic minions and undead servants to attack the opposite side of the city to distract from his true purpose! The battle is joined, possibly during a raid (one of the gangs described here or in previous Pecos community articles) to further enhance the confusion.

Sinker: BlueFuture rushes to respond to the attack, leaving the ruins (an ancient temple worshipping a dark pantheon of entropic intelligences, containing a Rune staff!) with little security for 3D6 minutes. If Mortis reaches the staff, he will use its power to visit the battlefield and wreak havoc, raising all the newly dead to continue their assault!

Murder at High Ridge

Hook: A prominent member of the management team at BlueFuture has been murdered, and her family is looking for adventurers to investigate. Although it appears to be a suicide, the family doesn't believe BFSecurity or the militia are treating murder as a possibility. They want answers, and can afford to pay 5,000 credits a day until the job is done – they will also grant a stipend of 10,000 credits for expenses. If there are no results in a week, they will seek other investigators.

Line: A tip: someone was seen with a camera near the estate, on the night the manager's death occurred. Characters will discover that the cameraman is Les Yorgo, a disreputable merchant who sells bootleg movies and music, and moonlights as a candid photographer of the rich and powerful to blackmail them for money. On the night in question, Yorgo saw a disheveled man with horrifying, monstrous deformities, and a man in a black suit. They entered the home and killed the woman, and Yorgo has the video to prove it.

Sinker: The vagabond E.R. Rutger is the murderer, but was acting on the Board's orders! The manager had discovered one of Z-Doktor's abhorrent pet projects and was threatening to go

public, and so she was silenced. Rutger will attempt to bribe or kill the players, depending on how they approach him. If he decides to tell them why he killed her (has the Advanced Training to resist interrogation), he will *always* try to kill the characters afterward. If necessary, he will use a Dimensional Portal scroll to try and escape with Gary to the Magic Zone.

The Nowhere 500

Hook: BlueFuture is celebrating the next phase of construction with a grand race around the new perimeter of the excavation zone, and erected stands for onlookers as well as concession stands and betting tables. The entrants can use any low-flying or ground vehicle, but may also run if they possess super-speed (no teleportation or Rifting, sorry). The local being to beat is a Machine Man O.C.C. from Phase World who bonds with his boosted-up hovercycle and becomes one with the machine. His name is Klapor Osrivicos Omalin, and the odds are in his favor for every race he is in.

Line: Klepp the Schlepp is looking to fix the race, and hires some newcomers to make sure that Klapor never shows up for his race – this can be anything up to kidnapping or murder, which Klepp doesn't want. He'll pay handsomely – 5,000 credits per person plus whatever the characters would like to bet on the races he's fixing (odds are mostly 5:1 or better for the racers Klepp has arranged to win).

Sinker: Klepp doesn't care about the races at all, and is actually just trying to divert attention so he can move some questionable Bio-Wizard merchandise in from Atlantis while all eyes are on the Nowhere 500. In fact, to make sure there is plenty of drama, he will have other operatives there to call out the characters on their sabotage and/or race fixing! He will have an alibi for everything, but BFSecurity will be interested in the shipping manifest discrepancies if discovered and it will take the Board's intervention to smooth things over. (If desirable, the G.M. may also have Apocalypse Jasha or another speed-freak Pecos gang leader show up to the races and demand to participate, creating extra drama!)

Pay Day

Hook: Marching straight up to the gates of Nowhere, three dozen Brodkil demons plant their feet and demand to see Hank Acari. They claim that he hired them and never paid them, and they refuse to leave until he does. They are heavily armed and armored, including some Naruni gear, with vicious-looking bionic reconstruction common amongst their number.

Line: The largest of the Brodkil, Snagrod Krakrok, is surprisingly intelligent and even-mannered. His head is dotted with Psynetic implants, and he is practically a full conversion 'borg with all of his enhancements. He will agree to let the characters act as his representative – if they promise to bring Acari and Z-Doktor to him, and he will not enter the city and provoke BFSecurity.

Sinker: Snagrod's story is true! The Brodkil come from the same dimension as the Laughing Ones gang, and were hired by Acari as a fighting force to bring back to Earth and lead against the Coalition – or so they were told. Instead they were experimented on by Z-Doktor and used as a distraction, transported by Valentine into a killing field where their deaths against the CS

would fuel a magical ritual intended to transform the Shifter into a godling! Acari will want the Brodkil destroyed, and if the players will do it for him he will give them a selection of TW gear as payment, but if the players can instead convince Snagrod to seek out the Laughing Ones or Valentine, the sub-demons will leave ‘peacefully’ to fight another day. (**G.M. Note:** A metamorphosed Valentine may decide to provoke one of the other Pecos gangs to attack the Brodkil and Nowhere’s defenses in order to cover his tracks!)

Impact Review

Hook: Somewhere on the ley line about 120 miles (192 km) north of Nowhere, the terrain changes from typical Texas desert scrub and wilderness to a dense fungoid jungle full of strange, mushroom-like ‘trees’ and scampering alien creatures that dart among their branches and many more Poltergeists and Entities than one would expect to find, even on a ley line. Within this changed landscape are two large Techno-Wizard contraptions – the pipeline ‘mouths’ which feed Nowhere P.P.E. – and a group of humans examining them.

Line: The humans are peaceful – if they think the characters are trustworthy, they identify themselves as investigators from the realm of Psyscape, who are examining a migratory shift in Entities across the Magic Zone. (These are a mid- or high level Psi-Druid, Zapper, and Psi-Tech, along with 2-4 minor or magic men-at-arms O.C.C.s.) They will want to follow the trace magic of the pipeline to its source and confront whomever is disrupting the metaphysical ecosystem!

Sinker: A Soul Harvester of Nxla is stalking the psychics, with a number of Soulless Xombies and ritual zombies, who will attack and attempt to kill the Psyscapers! The players may encounter either the Psyscape team or the Harvester first, but it is only a matter of time before Nxla’s servant finds their prey. If the battle disrupts the pipeline’s alarms, BlueFuture will send Skelebots or a security team – perhaps even Hank, Z-Doktor, or Belmont to react. They will offer to help destroy the Harvester, but if the Psyscapers push to shut down the pipeline, they will try and destroy them to leave no witnesses.

I am Legion, Episode VI

An Adventure and Official Source Material for Splicers®

Concept developed by Chris “Slappy” Kluge and Charles “Chuck” Walton II

Written by Chris Kluge

Illustrated by Charles Walton

Note: For Part I, see *The Rifter*® #71-72 Special Double Issue, page 86. For Part II, see *The Rifter*® #73, page 63. For Part III, see *The Rifter*® #74, page 40. For Part IV, see *The Rifter*® #75, page 67. For Part V, see *The Rifter*® #76, page 71.

The Final Showdown

All of the choices the players have made earlier in the adventure will determine what kind of resources they have available during the final confrontation. If they skipped the *Artemis Secret Weapons Facility* (see *The Rifter*® #74, #75 and #76), they will pretty much be on their own. They will still have the Archangel Drake Benton, Sr. Sweeper Anderson Long, and the Badger Armored Personnel Carrier on their side, but the Stalker War Mounts will leave them to go help their friends back at the Lab. Worse yet, the players will miss out on the impressive amount of ordnance scattered throughout the facility and instead will have to rely solely on the weapons and equipment they had when they first left the underground haven. If the players did return to the weapons facility, the resources they are able to gather will largely depend on how successful they are. Fully stopping the invasion force will gain them the enormous thanks and support of the Martin (Puppet Master), the Biotic Isaac (Head of Security), and all the facility’s defenders. The Lab itself will be a total loss either way, and the Engineer will need to be moved, but if Legion’s attack is stopped, Isaac and the majority of the survivors will lend their support to the final assault against Legion’s Fac-

tory Walker while Martin, the Saint, and a handful of defenders will stay behind to coordinate a slower, more careful evacuation of the Engineer. If the players go to the Lab and are unable to save the Engineer, then they will likely still walk away with some powerful weapons and a few extra survivors to help them in the final attack. If by chance Legion successfully captures the *Engineer*, *Dante*, then every survivor will join in the final assault to hopefully rescue him before Legion can merge his body with the Factory Walker. Legion will keep her minions hunting through the facility to exterminate any stragglers even after successfully capturing her prey, so exiting the facility will still be a challenge.

The group can attempt to exit through the damaged airlock or tunnel out using the Badger. Multiple trips may be necessary if there are a lot of survivors, or the Badger can work at a slower pace to create a semi-permanent passageway. Depending on the outcome of the assault, the group may be in too big of a hurry for this to be a viable option.

Once everyone is on the surface, they will need to try and pick up Legion’s trail. Fortunately, this is rather easy to do. It is quickly apparent that Legion wanted to stay close to the weapons facility rather than stretch her signal relay chain too thin. The sounds of battle can be heard off in the distance and multiple

plumes of thick black smoke can be seen rising up on the horizon. It looks like Legion is only a few miles (3.2 km) away. Any survivors from the Lab will inform the group that there is a pretty good sized Industrial Center in that area. It seems Legion was simultaneously assaulting a N.E.X.U.S. installation while trying to take down the Lab. Drake Benton states that this was probably why the assault force was such a “reasonable size.” He could not even imagine how terrible the weapons facility assault would have been if Legion had been able to throw the full weight of her forces against them. Her arrogance and over-confidence in her abilities resulted in her being stretched a little too thin in the weapons facility. Hopefully, this will also be true during the final assault.

(Game Master Note: *If the players and any additional survivors that will be accompanying the Assault Team to the Factory Walker need a short time to eat and recuperate from their ordeal inside the Secret Weapons Facility, then let them. However, be sure to remind them that the longer they take to recover, the more likely Legion will be receiving any and every stolen item, weapon, prisoner and War Mount from the lab and may be adding them to her own forces to potentially be used against the players during their assault. It’s even worse if Legion was successful in capturing the Engineer, as she might be in the process of installing the Engineer into her Factory Walker, making this rescue extremely difficult and the use of any Shell Bombs far more challenging. Any attempts to call for additional reinforcements should be heavily contested, as the risk of accidentally introducing any additional agents of Legion’s into the assault force could jeopardize the entire mission.*)

The terrain leading up to the edge of the Industrial Center is heavily forested, so the group should be able to approach the battle without being detected by either side (even with the enormous Badger in tow). As they get closer, they begin to realize that the chaos of the scene is beyond anything they have witnessed before. N.E.X.U.S.’s surprise presence will provide an excellent distraction for the player’s assault, but it may be more chaotic than they can handle. The skies are filled with thousands of cyborgs and robots buzzing about the area like a swarm of angry bees. The ground surrounding the area for miles is continuously quaking from the thunderous concussions of hundreds of explosions and the stampeding feet of thousands of heavy robotic minions. Worse yet, the group can hear the unmistakable sound of three maybe four separate Land Dominator super cannons blasting away off in the distance. Of course with Legion, it is difficult to know which side these massive robots are fighting on (in fact, there could be some fighting on each side). Wreckage and shattered robots litter the forest floor for miles surrounding the Industrial Center and the debris just keeps getting thicker the closer they get. It looks like N.E.X.U.S. has had enough of her upstart sister and has decided to throw everything she can muster at Legion’s forces. From what the players can see, the two forces seem pretty evenly matched in the air which has resulted in a bit of a stalemate, but unfortunately the sheer number of combatants would make it impossible for the player characters to even consider taking to the air for long periods of time. Of course, that is not exactly the plan with the Badger anyway. They should still be planning to take the battle underground, but they will need to get a look at the scene before they can proceed.

The group is nearly to the edge of the tree line when they hear an unexpected voice pipe up from their left flank and say, “It’s

about time you all got here. I was beginning to think I was going to have to do this myself.”

The survivors from the Lab instinctively draw their weapons and spin to their left to face the source of the noise, but all they see is empty forest. The players may not be able to see anything either, but the voice should be very familiar to them. Their suspicions are quickly confirmed as the shimmer of a Stealth Field is dispelled to reveal Archos, the Deliveryman that led them safely into and out of the Harrisburg Ghost Town. As he drops his field, he continues to address the group, “Normally I’d maintain noise discipline and use Bio-Comms, but it looks like Legion figured out how to listen in on them...You mind pointing your guns somewhere else? I’m not in the mood.”

Whether the players are relieved to see their old comrade or suspicious of his timely arrival, Drake Benton will be extremely distrustful of this newcomer. He, more than anyone, is still feeling the sting of betrayal from Shauna Davies’ involvement with Legion (no matter how involuntary it was), and he does not want to be the victim of another one of Legion’s games. Drake keeps his wings poised and weapon trained on the Deliveryman as he starts to grill him for information, “Who are you and what are you doing here?”

“I’m doing my job, which was to keep tabs on Legion and scout out the area for the assault force, which I guess is you. Your friends know me well enough, so put down your gun so you can go do YOUR job.”

“Oh, I am doing my job. How did you find us?”

“You’re kidding, right?” the Deliveryman chuckles back. “I could hear you stomping through the underbrush from miles away. You guys have absolutely no concept of stealth. I’m shocked the Machine hasn’t pounced on you yet. Good thing she’s distracted with her little war. Look, I’ve scouted out a safe path to the Factory Walker. I found a decent vantage point to survey the scene. I can lead you right to it.”

“I’m sure you can,” Drake sneers. He then turns to the players and says, “You’ve seen how Legion works. She’s known exactly where we were going to be twice now and dropped one of her infiltrators in our path. Don’t you think this feels a little familiar? Do you really think we can trust this guy? Seriously, how well do you really know him?”

(Game Master Notes: *Make sure you do not pass up this excellent opportunity to really enflame the player characters’ suspicions. By now, they have been through four or five ambushes and have been betrayed by a trusted NPC, so it should not be too difficult to play off of their paranoia. Use Drake Benton to make the players really question their trust in this man. If a player character vouches for the Deliveryman’s loyalty, have Drake point out that even if he was loyal once, Legion may have surgically seized control of his mind. If someone suggests a reasonable way to test if the Deliveryman is an infiltrator (like Electromagnetic Vision), have Drake voice his doubts that it would work, since Legion may have already figured some way around it. To further enflame their suspicions, have the (now quite irritated) Deliveryman, Archos, point out to the players that Drake is far more likely to be an infiltrator than him. After all, he was the one working side by side with a traitor all this time, and he seems to be the one trying to disrupt this assault with his irrational accusations.*

Ultimately, neither Drake nor the Deliveryman is an infiltrator, but that is no reason to pass up the chance to mess with the player characters’ minds. Keep stoking the fires of paranoia until

the players settle the situation, one way or another. Everyone else in the group will defer to the player characters to make the final decision. They will be the ones given the ultimate say on whether to leave Drake and/or the Deliveryman behind or to include them in the assault. If they decide to leave one or both behind, they will then need to decide if they are left behind alive or dead. Given all they have been through with both men, killing either one of them will likely be a difficult decision to make. Of course, considering all of Legion's tricks they have fallen victim to, it may also be rather difficult for the players to trust them. Something else to consider is that the Deliveryman really does have some vital information concerning the terrain and Legion's forces. He can safely lead the group to a well concealed hill that overlooks the Factory Walker. Without his help, they will have to find their own way. Instead of a guaranteed approach, the players will need to roll under their Prowl Skills to avoid being detected by one side or the other. Drake's value has also been proven time and again by this point, and losing his power in the final assault would also be a significant loss.)

Once the group has a chance to scout out the area, they get a good look at the monumental task ahead of them. The field below contains thousands of the Machine's mightiest combatants, but most of them are utterly dwarfed by the enormous Factory Walker standing near the Industrial Center. However, there are a few other players on the field that look like they could give it a run for its money, including the three Land Dominators the group heard previously. It looks like all three are fighting for N.E.X.U.S., but it also looks like they are not faring well in the battle with Legion's forces. One Dominator is absolutely covered with Collectors that are busily dismantling it as the Machine's forces frantically try to scrape them off. The other two are being torn apart by a gigantic, centaur-like titan. It is nearly half the size of the Factory Walker and judging by the job it is doing on the Land Dominators, its power is nearly unmatched. Worse yet, it appears that the Factory Walker is busily assembling a second one. The components are complete; they just need to be assembled, so it is only a matter of time before the players' odds of success get that much slimmer. The Walker has its back to the Industrial Center so that it can work in relative peace, but N.E.X.U.S. is still trying her best to disrupt its work. Of course, the thick ring of defenders surrounding the Factory Walker is making this quite difficult. In addition to nearly fifty Legionnaires and dozens of Fusion Borgs, Assault Slayers, and Battle Tracks, there is also another monstrous robot to its immediate right that appears to be an upgraded version of the Prison Robot. It seems Legion either learned from her mistakes with her last design or simply created a weaker robot before in order to provide a more tempting target. Either way, she made some substantial upgrades to this new prisoner transport. The basic design looks like a cross between a snake and a centipede. It is covered with a unique layered armor that allows its main body to expand in order to store more captives, much like a snake that has just gorged on a meal. This particular viper looks like it is storing quite a few captives at the moment. Its midsection is stretched out near its maximum capacity, and the transparent plates along the sides give the players a glimpse at the hundreds of humans trapped inside. Unlike before, Legion is keeping the prisoners close to the Factory Walker. In fact, they are so close that they will likely be caught in the blast radius of the Omega Shell. It looks like Legion is done playing games as well. She is done with being a target and is doing ev-

everything she can to discourage the Resistance from striking at her Walker. The players look like they will have another tough choice to make: Do they sacrifice hundreds to save millions, or do they risk everything to try and move the Prison Robot out of the blast zone? Who knows, it looks pretty sturdy. Maybe it can survive the blast anyway. Maybe it is not even worth the risk. Of course, that is for the player characters to decide. If the player characters did visit the weapons facility, then they likely have an army of powerful Splicers in tow just itching to pay Legion back for the destruction of their home and comrades. They may have come seeking vengeance, but seeing so many humans in harm's way might encourage them to turn this strike mission into a recovery mission. If Isaac is there, he will insist on at least trying to draw the Prison Robot away from the Factory Walker. Once again, they will ultimately defer to the player characters' wishes on this one. Everyone knows that destroying the Factory Walker is the number one priority and they are willing to do whatever is necessary to ensure this happens. Once the player characters decide on their plan of attack, they can start tunneling directly from their vantage point on top of the hill towards the Factory Walker. However, once they move underground, they will discover Legion's last surprise.

(Game Master Note: *There are two possible ways to reveal this last threat. The easiest way is to have the Badger detect a large object with its seismic sensors bearing down on its position from below ground. To add a little drama to the reveal, however, you could have at least one (preferably two) Tunnel Rat War Mounts along with their Outriders escorting the Badger on its approach. In this case, an Outrider can deliver a panicked communication that there is something down here with them just seconds before his final scream is mangled and cut short. If there is a second Tunnel Rat in the procession, have its Outrider say, "I've got it on seismic. Diverting to intercept... My god, what is that? It's huge!" Then the second Outrider goes silent as well. It is at this point that the group is introduced to the first obstacle to their mission, the Hydraconian Subterranean Assault Robot, and to the concept of **Underground Combat**.)*

The serpent-like Hydraconian is just another example of Legion's adaptability. Her plot may have put the Badger into play, but she was not about to let this dangerous wildcard tunnel through her territory unchallenged. The Shell Bomb is still a threat to her plans, so she built the Hydraconian to prevent the Splicers from delivering this weapon to the feet of her Walker. If they want to get the Shell Bomb in place, they are going to need to get past or go through the Hydraconian first or find another way.

Underground Combat

Underground combat is only "efficiently" possible by creatures or machines that possess a sufficient digging speed (30 mph/48 km or greater) and are equipped with a Seismic Sensor (anything slower than 30 mph is reduced to half of their attacks per melee round). Movement and fighting underground is very different than on the surface. It is actually more similar to flying than walking in the sense that a creature or machine tunneling through the tightly packed dirt must constantly move forward in order to change direction. Much like a plane flying through the air, someone tunneling through the earth cannot make abrupt course corrections; they can only make subtle adjustments as

they charge ahead. Along these same lines, underground combat is more analogous to aerial dog fighting than anything else. While the combatants can only deliver close combat strikes, they must first jockey for position. Since mobility is so limited underground, a combatant can only attack or defend against threats that are directly in front of it, so someone can gain a significant advantage in battle if he can attack an opponent from his flanks, from above or below or from behind. To accomplish this, a combatant must outmaneuver his opponent. Both must first roll a 20 sided die to see who wins position, high roll wins. Since underground combat is in its infancy, there really is no formal skill training in this area. The only bonus awarded is a +2 bonus to whichever participant is the faster digger. The winner then becomes the dog tail and gains position behind the dog. The dog tail then has one melee round to close the distance and engage in close combat. After one melee round, both combatants roll again. If the dog tail wins, then he remains in position behind the dog. If the dog wins, then he has lost the dog tail and both must roll again to re-determine position. Unlike aerial dog fighting, underground combatants can come to a complete stop at any time and attempt a special maneuver. In this case, the combatant quickly tries to dig out the area around him in order to gain enough room to turn in any direction. This is the only way to drastically alter course (including making a 180 degree turn), but it requires 3 attacks per melee for horizontal direction changes or 2 attacks per melee when changing vertical direction.

Gaining a superior position on an opponent is tricky, but the benefits are dramatic. The dog is -6 to parry close combat attacks from the dog tail and dodge rolls are not possible. In addition, if the dog tries to strike back in hand-to-hand combat (such as with its hind legs), it suffers a penalty of -8 to strike. Most underground combatants have some type of rear-facing weapon systems to prevent from being left in such a vulnerable position, but these are not one hundred percent effective either. The angle of the attacker's approach may limit the firing angle on the dog tail, so the dog is -4 to strike with ranged weapons but only -1 to strike with area effect weapons like explosives (although at this close range, the dog will also take half damage from the attack). Remember, at any point the dog can sacrifice three melee attacks and dig out the area around itself in order to turn and face his attacker.

Playing Out the Final Battle (Possible Scenarios)

The stage is set, the final battle has begun, and it should be an epic one. Although there are thousands of robots from both sides (and possibly dozens of Splicers) cluttering the field and blanketing the skies up above, the player characters will really only need to face a handful of the most significant threats in order to prevail. The rest of the fighting should just play out in the background (including the part played by the Splicers from the weapons facility). Game Masters, feel free to use these background players to aid the characters when things get a little too hairy or to add a little extra challenge if things go too well. This battle could go in many possible directions, so it is important to be as fluid and flexible as possible, and to let the players' decisions dictate how things progress. Below are some of the major choices the players will need to make and how Legion, N.E.X.U.S., and their Splicer

allies would react to such actions. Try not to force the players down any one path. As Game Master, it is your job to let them decide what they will do and then to provide them with reasonable obstacles to accomplishing their goals. In other words, do not try to kill them off with overwhelming odds because that will be all too easy to accomplish in this final fight. Also remember that the players do not have to stay and fight to the death. If things start spiraling out of control, it is perfectly acceptable to retreat and live to fight another day.

Key Decisions:

1. Stay underground or come to the surface: This decision will largely depend on how well the player characters fare in their fight with the Hydraconian. If the player characters are getting the better of the Hydraconian (or defeat it outright), they will likely choose to stay underground throughout the final battle. This is ultimately the safest choice and it will provide the players with a significant advantage against Legion. The Hydraconian is the only minion that is even capable of opposing the Badger underground, and its removal will give the player characters a clear path to the Factory Walker. As soon as the Hydraconian is destroyed, Legion will realize her Walker is in jeopardy and will attempt to run off. This will provide a unique challenge since the Walker will either need to be disabled in order to plant the Shell Bomb beneath its feet, or they will have to time it perfectly so that Legion crosses over the bomb just as it detonates. If the Hydraconian proves to be too great an adversary, the players can choose to come to the surface and try to lose it within the chaos of this massive firefight. Unfortunately, as soon as the player characters break through to the surface, they will discover that they are Legion's number one priority. The second she sees the Badger, she will immediately shift all her forces to destroy it. This will also be the moment when the player characters discover they have another powerful (and unexpected) ally watching their backs. The Machine personality Ishtar is controlling the N.E.X.U.S. army. This brilliant tactician will immediately notice the adjustment and will deduce that if Legion fears this creature, then it must hold the key to defeating her rogue sister. Within milliseconds of Legion redirecting her forces, Ishtar will command her army to converge on the Badger and defend it at all costs. She will sacrifice any number of robots to keep the players safe, but there is only so much Ishtar can do. While the majority of Legion's minions will be held at bay, the player characters will still need to get past the enormous Siege Titan in order to reach the Factory Walker. The Titan will leave its fight with the Land Dominators to turn its attention to the Badger. Of course, this does not mean that the Land Dominators have finished with the Titan. The Siege Titan is far more than the player characters or even the Badger want to handle, but luckily, it has already been severely weakened in combat (reduce M.D.C. by 60 percent) and the continuous pressure from Ishtar will prevent the Siege Titan from being able to bring its full capabilities against them (effectively reduces attacks per melee by half since the other half will be used against Ishtar's minions). It will be a tough fight, but the continuous pounding from the Badger and two Land Dominators will bring it down eventually. Once it falls, the only thing left will be the Factory Walker (and of course, its retinue of dozens of defenders). The player characters might want to reconsider re-submerging underground at this point.

2. Free the captives from the Prison Robot or sacrifice them in the Shell Bomb blast: Another important choice the player characters will need to make is whether to try and move the Prison Robot away from the Factory Walker or leave it in the blast radius of the Shell Bomb(s). It is far enough away that it will only suffer half damage from the blast, but this is still more than enough to obliterate the robot along with every prisoner inside of it. If the player characters destroy the Hydraconian, then this task will be somewhat easier. They will simply need to disable the Prison Robot so that it cannot follow the Factory Walker as it runs away. Of course, this is not as easy as it sounds. If the Walker is staying put by the Industrial Center, then they will need to find a different way to separate the two. Not that the player characters need to be involved in this task at all. This would actually be an excellent objective to assign to the survivors from the weapons facility. Game Masters, if the Lab survivors are the ones going after the Prison Robot, then feel free to let it play out in whatever way works best for the adventure. If the players are breezing through this final confrontation, then you can give them a little bit more challenge by having their Splicer allies frantically request support from the player characters before they get overwhelmed. Then the players will need to decide if they sacrifice even more human lives in the blast or attempt a rescue. In the alternative, if the players need a little help, then just let the prison rescue go off without a hitch and perhaps a few heroic sacrifices made by several Tempests or N.E.X.U.S. bots to assist the players can effectively assist them.

3. What to do if the Shell Bomb does not completely destroy the Factory Walker: Despite the devastating power of the Shell Bombs, it is entirely possible that the Factory Walker could survive the blast (even two blasts). On a positive note, it will at least be severely weakened and all of the nearby protectors will have been vaporized or severely damaged in the explosion. The negative is that the players will have to face the full wrath of a very pissed off Legion. There is no doubt within anyone's mind that Legion is incensed with the Players. Ishtar will once again be instrumental in keeping Legion's hordes off of the player characters' backs, but they will still need to face down the Factory Walker themselves. Game Masters, this is the grand finale of a long and arduous journey. Let the player characters square off against the Walker alone, but throw in any number of their allies if things become too challenging. The players have been on the receiving end of Legion's games throughout the entire adventure, and giving them too much help would lessen the satisfaction of finally bringing her down. Remember though, this adventure does not have to end with either Legion or the player characters meeting their end. If everything is truly going wrong, it is perfectly acceptable for the player characters to retreat and live to fight another day.

Conclusion

The adventure can really end in only two ways, either Legion lives or she dies. If she lives through the final assault, then she will launch into phase two of her plan. She will take over the Industrial Center and convert it into an extension of her consciousness. Once wired with the proper satellite receivers, Legion will be able to run this manufacturing facility and her mobile forces simultaneously. She will then begin manufacturing a new army

around this building as she sends her Factory Walker out to capture the next Industrial Center. She will continue along this pattern until the entire surface is under her control, and then she will spread her influence underground. Whether she secured the Engineer or not at this point will not matter. If she did not achieve her goal of harnessing and learning Bio-Technology, then she will simply save that dream until she is strong enough to take down a Great House directly. The world will know a new level of fear as Legion spreads across it like an uncontrolled wildfire. The players can return home to a disappointed yet welcoming Great House without any issues from the Legion mole within its ranks (although they still have no idea who it is). Warlord Artemis will believe them about a Legion infiltrator among his trusted advisors and will take steps to flush him or her out, but he will inform the players that it is no longer their concern. An unsatisfying answer to say the least, but at this point, Warlord Artemis has more pressing matters to deal with and he is not quite as optimistic and impressed with the player characters as he once was.

If the players do destroy the Factory Walker, then every Legion controlled robot will suddenly deactivate and fall to the ground in a heap. Now the players just have to deal with the minor detail that they are completely surrounded by thousands of N.E.X.U.S. controlled robots. However, as long as they do not do anything foolish, Ishtar will let them all walk away unharmed. She is not only thankful for their help in destroying Legion, but she was also impressed with their combat prowess. She actually thanks the player characters through one of her Steel Troopers and tells them that she will let them all walk away now as a courtesy and respectable honor from one warrior to another as long as they do not do anything to change her mind. They should likely feel grateful at first that they do not have to fight through such impossible odds, until they see the Machine's forces scooping up Legion's minions and shuttling them into the Industrial Center. Ishtar notices their observations and confirms their suspicions, "Your help was appreciated which is why I reward you with your lives, but the other rewards go to us. Feel free to try and deny us our prize if you're up to it, or you can go now. The choice is yours." She then turns away and goes back to the task of gathering up the remains of Legion's designs. As the players leave the scene, they see another Steel Trooper bend down and pick up the skull of one of their former comrades. It then mounts it on its armored shoulder like a grisly trophy and turns to face the players. They are more than familiar enough with the Machine to know that this is a sign that the Kali personality is controlling the robot. It almost seems like it is smiling at the player characters as it continues to stare. Finally, it says to them, "So many wonderful toys to play with... Don't worry, I'll let you play with them soon."

When the player characters return home, they will be greeted as heroes throughout the entire Great House. In fact, tales of their victory will eventually spread throughout the entire region and they will become renowned as heroes of humanity and warriors of exceptional ability. Epic, romanticized stories and plays will be written, embellished and reenacted within various stadiums within the Resistance havens. Resin sculptures and paintings will adorn the Barracks corridors. After being greeted with a thunderous applause throughout the halls of the underground Artemis haven, they will eventually be brought before Warlord Artemis and the Senate. The mood in this chamber is far different this time than it was the first time they were summoned here. They walk into a room filled with raucous celebration. The maps

spread across the conference table have been replaced by large pitchers and steins filled with Bio-Tech ale. It looks like some of the Senators are actually quite drunk at this point. When Warlord Artemis notices their presence, he walks over and gives each character a huge bear hug and then orders his servants to get them all something to drink and eat. Warlord Artemis and the Senators then spend the next few hours “debriefing” the player characters, and sharing their own drunken war stories. They also explain that they discovered the identity of the mole that Legion placed in their ranks. When Legion died and all her minions deactivated, every one of her infiltrators died with her, including one of Warlord Artemis’s personal guards. No one was sure how or when he was taken, but they all seemed pretty relieved to have this leak plugged. The discussion flows across many subjects throughout the night, including the player characters’ reward for a job well done. The War Mounts will need to be returned to the corral, but any other weapons and equipment recovered throughout the adventure are theirs to keep. They could also choose to sell any item back to the House at full market value. In addition, they can also join any Special Forces unit of their choosing. This is a special reward that allows each player character to choose any upgrade path even if they do not meet the attribute or experience level requirements. For example, a Dreadguard would be allowed to upgrade to a Dreadnaught even if his experience was not yet at level 6 and his P.S. and P.E. were not at 15 or higher. (**Note:** Additional Upgrade paths for other core O.C.C.s will be provided in a future Splicers supplement.) If the player characters went back and helped liberate the Weapons Facility, then Warlord Artemis will feel obliged to give each of them a little bit more for their troubles (4D6x1000 credits in mini-discs, 1D10 precious gems, the MVP of the Player group will have High-Level Security Clearance within 80% of House Artemis’ havens and outposts, and the group will have 40% approval usage of the Badger War Mount for future operations of high importance). If the player characters skipped the weapons facility, and went directly after the Factory Walker then Warlord Artemis will reward each player character with 1D6x1000 credits in mini-discs, 1D6 precious gems, and the group will have 20% approval usage of the Badger War Mount for future operations of high importance.

Epilogue

I am Legion, for We are many

FOR GAME MASTERS TO TEASE THE PLAYERS WITH. The Factory Walker may have fallen, but Legion would never allow herself to be vanquished so easily. The Walker truly did contain her consciousness, but that did not mean that it was trapped there. When the end drew near and her demise seemed a foregone conclusion, she downloaded her consciousness into a small, stealthy black robot (see *Black Shroud*) that she stashed in the forest beforehand. This sleek, ebony robot activated its cloak and snuck off in the aftermath. Legion eventually made her way to the same abandoned Industrial Center that she first used to build the Factory Walker. As she jacks into the mainframe of the plant and the facility goes online, lights flickering across massive parts of a second Factory Walker, she thinks to herself, “It seems subtlety did not work as well as I hoped it would. Guess it’s time to go

with plan B.” Legion then reaches out through her series of satellite feeds and underground relays until she connects with her remaining infiltrator in the House Artemis Senate. She thinks to herself what a shame it was to kill off her Royal Guard after all the effort it took to program him in the first place, but she had to divert suspicion away from her real prize, her precious Senator. She made it to her facility just in time to watch the drunken celebrations with the player characters back at House Artemis. Legion prides herself on her normally level-headed stoicism, but she must admit that losing her Factory Walker did irritate her somewhat. As her Senator puppet stares the player characters down coldly, she makes a personal note to be sure to pay them back for destroying her prized creation as soon as possible.

***** OFFLINE (*The End*) *****

I am Legion, Episode Six

Adventure Source Material

New Legion Machines

Black Shroud

This stealthy, sleek, feminine styled robot is what Legion utilizes as a last-ditch emergency escape pod that she will quickly download her consciousness into in order to preserve herself, if the Factory Walker is destroyed. Literally becoming a widow once it departs a fallen Factory Walker, the Black Shroud is exceptionally fast, and small enough that it can efficiently hide anywhere that a Splicer can, but is also formidable enough that it can effectively defend itself against most major threats that roam the planet.

Legion always keeps this precious unit hidden miles away from her forces, often trailing in the shadows or well hidden and secured from both N.E.X.U.S. or Resistance patrols and scouts. She maintains a dedicated direct link to this ebony-plated robot, so that her memories will always be preserved and up to date if the Walker should fall. Black Shroud resembles Legion’s digital persona within the Machine, including a wicked doll face hidden behind the helmet’s faceplate. The armor is made of durable compound carbon and alloy metals and is a polished black metal instead of flesh (although if Legion acquires an Engineer, she will quickly add Bio-Tech components and replace some of the metal armor with a chitinous hide and Biotech enhancements). It is lightly armed, but decently armored and shielded, and relies heavily on its most amazing feature of holographic camouflage and energy dampener screens. Legion designed this system herself, and no one else on the planet wields this technology. It allows Legion to project a perfect three-dimensional disguise around Black Shroud in an instant. She can make the robot resemble any humanoid robot like a Steel Trooper, Slicer, or Maintenance Drone or she can project an illusion that resembles a suit of Host Armor, Living Armor or even a War Mount. These disguises are solely composed of light so the deception is quickly revealed by touch or acute scenting abilities, though Legion will



often try to mask her disguises with the corresponding smells to help support the overall illusion.

Legion utilizes the Black Shroud robot as a failsafe and temporary transport of her conscious whenever she suffers a major setback and is forced to retreat to one of her secretly constructed and well hidden facilities throughout the planet. Once the Black Shroud arrives, Legion scouts the area and thoroughly analyzes and clears it of any tampering or enemy presence. Then the robot jacks into the central mainframe and activates the facility in order to rebuild her new army as she schemes and devises her plans to fulfill her conquest of global domination and unification. It is also during this down time that she obsesses on how to exact vengeance upon those who set her plans back and what improvements she can make on her new designs.

Class: Stealth Infiltrator and Emergency Survival Robot.

M.D.C. by Location:

Shoulder Plating (2; Reinforced) – 75 each

Arms (6) – 95 each

Hands (6) – 25 each

Forearm Dual Blue-Green Blasters (6) – 15 each

Legs (2) – 130 each

Feet (2) – 20 each

High-Speed Back Mounted Thrusters (4) – 90 each

Mini-Missile Pods (2) – 40 each

*Bio-Comm Jammer – 30

**Head – 120

***Main Body (Heavily Reinforced) – 580

*** Depleting the M.D.C. of the Main Body will completely destroy the Bio-Robot. **Note:** The destruction of a Black Shroud robot will trigger any functioning Factory Walker of Legion to instantly begin the production of a new unit.

Speed:

Running: Maximum speed is 200 mph (320 km). The act of running does not tire the robot.

Digging: 10 mph (16 km) through dirt or sand, half that speed through clay, rock, or stone.

Leaping: 40 feet (12.2 m) high or lengthwise; increase by 50% with a running start.

Swimming: Not possible. Sinks like a stone, but can walk along the bottom of rivers and lakes up to a maximum depth of 1,000 feet (305 m).

Flying: The High-Speed Flight Pack can propel the Shroud up to a maximum speed of 300 mph (480 km) up to a maximum altitude of 3 miles (4.8 km), but cruising speed is typically 150 mph (240 km). The flight systems also enable the robot to hover stationary in mid-air. The Black Shroud can also hijack and interface into any Legionnaire's Wing Board, Flying Strike Ship or Sky Fighter if need be.

Statistical Data:

Height: 7 feet (2.1 m).

Width: 2-3 feet (0.6 to 0.9 m).

Length: 3 feet (0.9 m).

Weight: 480 lbs (216 kg).

Physical Strength: Robotic P.S. of 32.

Cargo: None.

Power System: Standard.

Trade Value: None. Technojackers can not meld or control any Black Shroud, nor utilize any Black Shroud weapon or device as

they are tainted with the Legion's Nanobot Virus (see Senses and Features).

Horror Factor: 15 to Splicers, none to machines.

Senses and Features: Standard Robot features plus the following:

Holographic Camouflage: Legion designed this system herself, and no one else on the planet wields this technology. It allows Legion to project a perfect three-dimensional disguise around Black Shroud in an instant. She can make the robot resemble any humanoid robot like a Steel Trooper, Slicer, or Maintenance Drone or she can project an illusion that resembles a suit of Host Armor or Living Armor. These disguises are solely composed of light so the deception is quickly revealed by touch. Range: up to a maximum 50 square feet (4.6 sq. m), but can move with the robot accordingly. Any solid object passing through the hologram will cause it to flicker for a few milliseconds before it refreshes. That is the reason Legion keeps her disguises to a smaller scale. Duration: Indefinite, as long as Legion is conscious.

Nanobot Virus: These specialized nanites devised by Legion invade nearby nanobots and gives them a multitude of programmed viruses so that Legion can reprogram the unit (drone, robot, borg or Amalgam) and seize control. Once the programs are in place, they feed false reports back to N.E.X.U.S. or to a Technojacker (if infected) as if everything is working as normal. It is until Legion desires to activate the nano-viruses that things go awry and when Legion seizes control. Legion's nanobots can not control a Technojacker, but she can hijack weapons, equipment, robots, power armors and vehicles being used.

Bio-Comm Jammer: This bio-technology is a mystery to the Great Houses of Area 24 as to who truly invented the device and if it was a Great House, why would they go this far? Whether it was Great House Charlemagne, Shiva, or another House desperately looking for some new advantage or if Legion somehow designed it, remains unknown. Whatever the case of origins, it is clear that it needs to be destroyed and never again engineered if the Resistance are to operate efficiently in the field using Bio-Comms. It is a another reason why some Bio-tech concepts and creations need to be ethically evaluated and well-guarded from enemy hands. This retractable, three-pronged device is mounted on the Black Shroud's upper spine and is used to temporarily black out Bio-Comm communications within a 4 mile (6.4 km) radius when the robot is most operative and mobile.

Primary Purpose: Communications Disruption & Interference.

Mega-Damage: Special: Each Single Pulse wave emitted temporarily takes all impacted Bio-Comms within a 4 mile (6.4 km) radius offline, creating a total silence or low humming noise. No physical damage is done to any Bio-Comm.

Rate of Fire: Limited rate of discharge: once per melee round (every 30 seconds), with each pulse counting as one of the Robot's melee actions/attacks.

Duration: Each pulse emitted lasts for 4D6 minutes.

Range: 4 mile radius (6.4 km).

Payload: This bio-device can only generate enough of a charge for six uses per hour; automatically recharges.

Number of Attacks per Melee (includes bonuses from being controlled by the Legion personality): 10.

Combat Bonuses (includes bonuses from being controlled by the Legion personality): +6 on initiative, +6 to strike with ranged

weapons, +9 to strike in hand to hand combat, +9 to parry, +9 to dodge, +2 to disarm, +4 to pull punch, and +5 to roll with punch. **Skills of Note:** Standard, plus Disguise 70% (the Black Shroud is skilled at mimicking the movements of any bipedal Robot) and Sign Language (74%).

Weapon Systems:

1. **Forearm Dual Blue-Green Blasters (6):** Mounted in each forearm are two blue-green lasers that are the Robot's primary weapon.

Primary Purpose: Assault.

Secondary Purpose: Defense.

Mega-Damage: 4D6 M.D. per single blast, 8D6 M.D. per dual blast.

Rate of Fire: Equal to the number of attacks per melee.

Range: 2,000 feet (610 m).

Payload: Effectively unlimited.

2. **Shock Blasters (2), also dubbed by Splicers as "Horror Cannons":** For some strange reason, Legion has been unable to reverse engineer or decipher the complete functionality and activation process of the Omega Blaster. Her failed attempts to replicate the Omega Blaster infuriate Legion, as they are a nagging reminder of how much she still has to learn regarding the alien technology, its origins, and the mysteries locked within Splicer technology. The more Legion has to learn and discover, the longer the gap is preserved between man & machine; thus stagnating her ultimate goal of unification. In a fit of rage while designing the Black Shroud, Legion designed her own version of the Omega Blaster as a tantrum relief and response to the devastating Omega Blaster. The results are another example of Legion's psychotic unpredictability, yet horrific results. Instead of a powerful energy weapon like the Omega Blaster, inside each breast plate cavity is a tank literally packed with sedated, augmented rodents. When the robot is ready, it simply jolts the mildly sedated rodents with electricity and then opens up one of its armored chest plates and launches 2D10 Ratbombs (see **Splicers® RPG**, page 35) up to 60 feet (18.3 m) away with its pressurized, high-velocity air valves.

The suddenly alarmed Ratbombs will immediately screech and hiss as they slam into their targets, and will scatter everywhere or even bite; but worse, some Ratbombs (1D4) will detonate upon impact. Any Ratbomb that is grabbed or killed will automatically explode. Any human within range (20 feet/6.1 m or closer) causes the nanites inside the Ratbomb to detonate. The shocking, horrified reactions that soldiers have when they see a horde of rats come flying at them at high speeds, and the terror they exude when they learn the propelled rodents are actually Ratbombs, constantly rewards Legion with entertaining moments. Worse are the soldiers that were unable to discern what it was that was launched at them until the Ratbombs are upon them, thus giving the "Shock" Blasters their namesake. There are even rare cases where Splicers were so horrified that they went into shock inside their armor and Legion gladly collected them both simply by deactivating the nanites inside the Ratbomb explosives.

There is a great need to remain extremely alert and worried if you have survived a Ratbomb bombardment as the Ratbombs that didn't detonate upon impact are frantically scurrying about causing collateral damage. Some Ratbombs

may be quickly closing in on unsuspecting soldiers or War Mounts who are pre-occupied with the Black Shroud or other enemy units. Ratbombs will scurry into passageways and tunnels where they are likely to encounter someone and detonate, causing cave-ins and either trapping or separating platoon members as well as attracting Machines or alien predators. Surviving Ratbombs may also head deeper into areas that are inhabited by Splicers or Retro-villagers or seek to hide inside food storages, weapons sacks or under dead carcasses. The very infestation and close proximity of Ratbombs forces Splicers to divide their attention to not only attempt to take out the primary targets assaulting them, but to also take out Ratbombs – from a safe distance. This chaos often enables Legion to make her escape if her robot has been discovered, cornered or pinned down. It is the aftermath of being bombarded with Ratbombs that causes Splicers to become paranoid of all rats, Ratbombs and unseen squeaky noises, inevitably creating a serious case of *Musophobia*. Reduce all combat bonuses by half for 1D6 weeks for anyone who experiences three or more Ratbomb bombardments. After those 1D6 weeks, the character will return to normal, but for every encounter with 2 or more rats or Ratbombs, a 24 hour flashback will flare up reducing all combat bonuses to half again. This phobia has a 65% chance of being corrected by a Librarian's probing.

Primary Purpose: Defense.

Secondary Purpose: Assault, Anti-Armor, Terror and Psychological Warfare.

Mega-Damage: Each Ratbomb is sealed with an explosive device that does 1D4x10 M.D. to a 20 foot (6.1 m) radius, 50% greater damage if the rodent was at the feet or base of the target/victim. Each burst will discharge 1D10+4 Ratbombs with 1D4 automatically detonating upon impact. Both Shock Blasters can be opened at the same time to launch 2D10+8 Ratbombs. Any human within range (20 feet/6.1 m or closer) causes the nanites inside the Ratbomb to detonate.

Rate of Fire: It takes two melee attacks to fire one or both Shock Blasters. One melee action to pull open one or both the chest plates and jolting the Ratbombs. A second melee attack to discharge them. If the chest plates are already open, then it takes only one melee attack/action to propel the Ratbombs. Note: Only 3 Ratbomb bombardments (single or dual blasters) can be fired per melee round.

Range: The high-velocity air blasters discharge the Ratbombs up to 700 feet (213.4 m), well under the Omega Blaster's range, but the amount of damage that they can potentially cause along with the psychological terror and the fact that the rodents can travel hundreds of miles before detonating, may exceed the impact of the comparative Omega Blasters.

Payload: Each air burst contains 1D10+4 sedated, Ratbombs. Each pack is separated by mesh screen filters so that the Robot can discharge up to 2 bursts per Shock Blaster before requiring a refill. The Shock Blasters can be refilled by the Black Shroud or a Collector, Legionnaire, Mechanic, Nex-Android or aboard the Factory Walker.

Bonus: +3 to strike on an aimed shot, +3 to Horror Factor to all humans, none against machines.

3. **Mini-Missile Pods (2):** Mounted on the back, just behind the shoulder plates, are two howitzer-styled mini-missile pods armed with mini-missiles. They are typically used against

long-range opponents trying to pursue the robot or to soften enemy lines to help the Black Shroud escape.

Primary Purpose: Assault.

Secondary Purpose: Defense.

Mega-Damage: 1D6x10 per plasma mini-missile.

Rate of Fire: Can fire volleys of 1, 2, 4, or 8.

Range: About a mile (1.6 km).

Payload: 8 mini-missiles per launcher (16 total).

4. Talons: The tip of each finger and toe has a retractable, 3-inch (7.6 cm) long talon. They make decent combat weapons, and are typically used for slashing and to slice open Splicer armor so that nearby Highjackers can climb inside. They are most commonly used for scaling walls and ceilings.

Primary Purpose: Assault.

Secondary Purpose: Defense.

Mega-Damage: 1D4 per talon, 4D4 per four-finger strike, or 4D8 per two-handed strike (counts as two attacks per melee).

5. Handheld Weapons: The Black Shroud's arms are at the right scale where each arm can carry all manner of technological armaments without any penalties to dexterity. Meaning each hand can be equipped with a handheld weapon, long-range or melee, and the Black Shroud can utilize each weapon accurately and efficiently. Legion typically avoids using the heavier robot armaments when she is trying to maintain her cover, but the Shroud does possess the strength to wield them with ease and will utilize numerous heavy weapons when needed.

6. Hand to Hand Combat: Assassin: With all of its ambidextrous limbs and humanoid build, the Black Shroud is adept in hand-to-hand combat.

Mega-Damage:

Restrained Punch: 1D4 M.D.

Punch: 2D6 M.D.

Power Punch: 4D6 M.D., but counts as two attacks.

Single Talon Strike: 1D4 M.D.

Four Talon Strike: 4D4 M.D.

Two-Handed Talon Strike: 8D4 M.D. (counts as two attacks).

Kick: 2D8 M.D.

Leap Kick: 4D8 M.D., but counts as two attacks.

Body Block/Ram: 3D6 M.D., but counts as two attacks.

Hydraconian Amalgam

(G.M. Note: *The Hydraconian should only be deployed if the players are using the Badger APC to plant any Shell Bombs underneath the Factory Walker. Legion has programmed the Hydraconian to focus its attack protocol in the following order: Badger, War Mounts and large N.E.X.U.S. machines/Robots, Host Armors, Biotics, humanoid robots and then all other threats.*)

With so many well-placed spies hidden within the Resistance that serve Legion, it was only a matter of time before Legion would learn of House Artemis's armored personnel carrier, the *Badger* (see **The Rifter® #74**, pages 59-64). The more Legion learned about the Badger the more she obsessed over what it could do under her control. Legion envisioned it burrowing into Splicers or N.E.X.U.S. strongholds and taking whatever she desired; Engineers, Librarians, civilians, Test Subjects, Prototypes, Armory Depots, Industrial centers, Retro villages, Ghost Towns, etc. However, capturing a Badger would prove no easy feat as

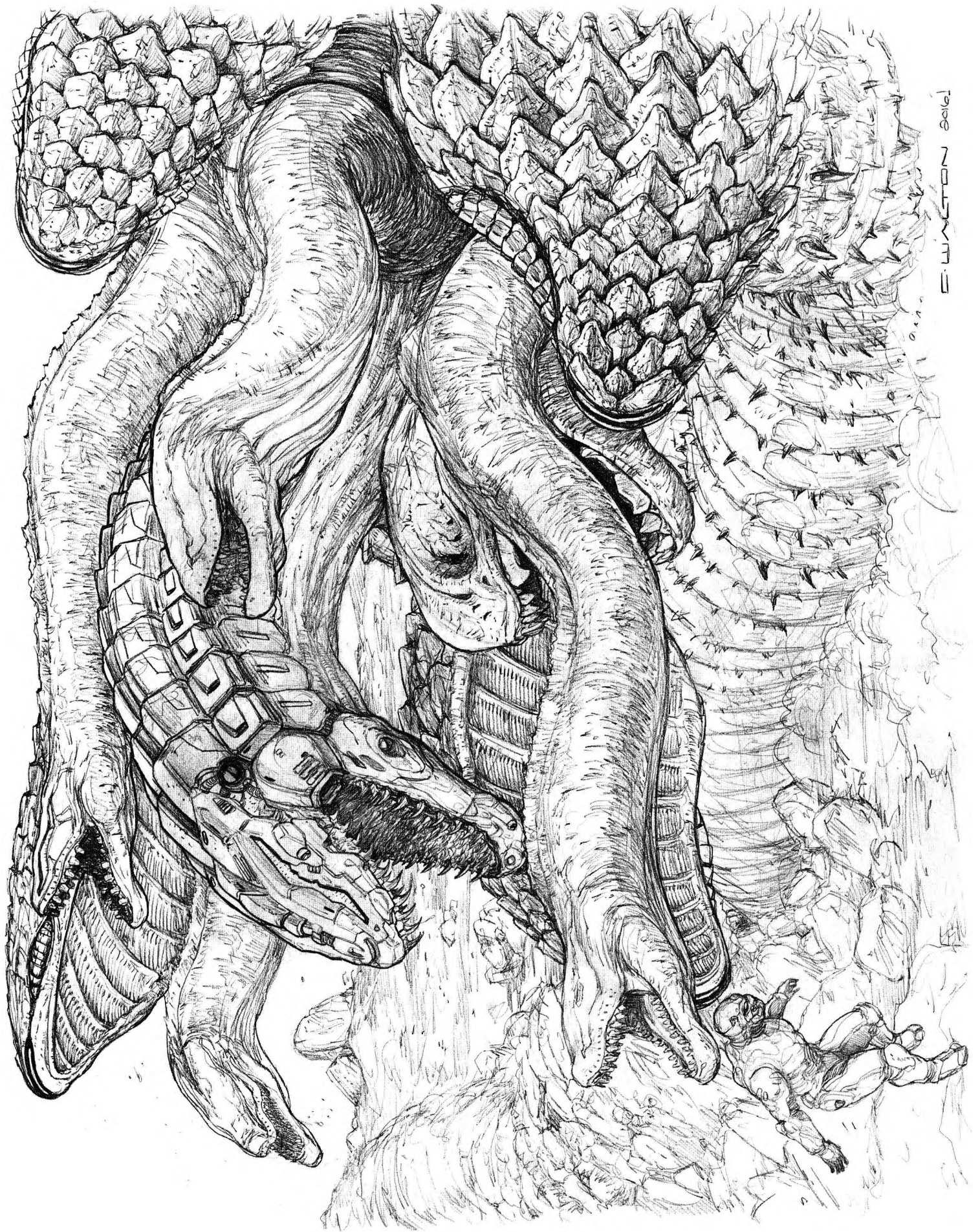
the APC is extremely rare (only 1D4 are active in the field) and are tightly classified as a guarded secret from nearly all Great Houses.

Even if Legion located one, it would certainly be heavily protected and being that the Badgers are one of the largest, toughest land and subterranean roaming War Mounts ever devised, she would also have to overcome it within its own territory. Underground habitats and passageways are one of the few habitats that the Machine does not have dominion over. Most combat robots and drones stay above ground, because the machine cannot maintain direct communication and control once they go so deep. It is also the area where a Badger reigns supreme. Legion's relay network systems would only get her so far. She knew she would need something more adept for underground travel and combat.

Legion contemplated numerous schemes to capture such a formidable, evasive quarry, without destroying it. Legion began to comb through N.E.X.U.S. design data files and eventually search through Gaia's cryo-zoo databases. Legion rarely tampers with Gaia as she has held a healthy respect for her older sister, but the plethora of creatures and what some of them could contribute to her objectives, was simply too tempting to pass up, especially when Legion learned of the extinct *Tesla Hydra*. It is unknown if it was a true denizen of this planet or if it's something that was brought by the ancient aliens long ago. Fossils seem to indicate that it is some form of prehistoric, multi-headed, eel-like species that traveled underground. Gaia had several specimens, but only one restored, mature adult female that she was eventually planning on releasing to hunt and harass Splicers and their havens. Growing to the scale of the largest whales, the Tesla is one of the few creatures on the planet that has multiple heads and some fossilized remains may have been the inspiration and DNA source for the first Dracos War Mounts long ago. The Tesla Hydra contains an array of electro-sensory glands that allow it to sense and emit low and high electric current pulses that it uses for detecting motion and navigation. These glands also can be used to deliver extremely powerful jolts of electricity to attack prey or to defend itself. With a few technological enhancements, augmentations and additional armor plating, this prehistoric monster would serve as the perfect foundation for Legion's subterranean assault Amalgam.

Legion didn't want to design a creature to necessarily kill the Badger or other targets, as she highly values capturing her prey alive for her own uses and experiments. However, because the Badger poses such a viable threat to the Factory Walker's existence, the Tesla Hydra in Gaia's cryo-zoo was stolen to contend with the Badger. The Legion's Hydra may not be capable of outright killing the Badger, but it certainly can deliver some stunning attacks and assaults that can immobilize the APC and quite possibly, any Splicer inhabitants inside. All of which Legion would gleefully seize for her own uses and experiments.

Legion designated her new creation the *Hydraconian Amalgam*. It is reinforced with compound carbon and ceramic armor plating, has an array of advanced robot sensory systems, additional weapon and defense systems and most importantly, a cerebrum-implant for Legion's direct control. The Hydraconian is well named for its multi-headed morphology, having five individual heads (four smaller, Viper eel-like heads and one large head) that are joined to a massive serpentine body. There are four protective shield plates that face forward and are able to generate a focused high-frequency Vibration Field that not only protects



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all of the Hydra's heads when they are tucked inside, but also allows the creature to burrow at high speeds. As it pushes through the underground, breaking up rock, dirt and any other debris in its path with the Vibro-Field, it maneuvers quite well by using its numerous spurs, scales and powerful serpent musculature. The Hydra moves effortlessly as if it is swimming through the ground, always hunting for prey.

Since the Tesla has such a high tolerance to electricity, Legion increased the Hydra's electrical output capacity by surgically installing a more powerful electro-sensory generator, a cybernetic transformer and several bio-capacitors. These enhancements enable the Amalgam to emit a deep ground-penetrating radar navigation system called *Electrolocation*. Mounted along the shoulders and back are a series of segmented tubes called Jolt Cannons, which discharge powerful electrical currents at targets.

Legion's sensory enhancements have also created a major drawback as the Hydraconian is extremely sensitive to loud sounds such as sonic weapons and explosions. Not even Legion can override its pain and instincts to take flight. Gaia views the Hydraconian as an abomination and a premature attempt of what she could have done with the specimen and is hell-bent on culling every Legion monstrosity augmented from her Nature Preserves or Cryo-Zoo cache.

The Hydraconian typically burrows at low speeds as it searches for quarry. Once it detects something it will track the target and place itself below the target's trajectory and suddenly burrow at high speeds to intersect and ambush its victim. When tunneling through moist soil, mud or passing through swampy areas, the Hydraconian will discharge its Jolt Cannons when they're in range to try and shock prey, making it easier for the numerous Hydra heads to bite into the victim and snatch it underground to be devoured. As much as Legion would like to keep all of its quarry for her own experiments, she also understands and has accepted that in order to sustain her Hydraconian that it must feed and that some victims are simply collateral damage.

Class: Subterranean Breach and Heavy Assault Amalgam.

M.D.C. by Location:

- Retractable Legs (4) – 380 each
- Jolt Cannons (4) – 145 each
- *Jolt Cables (4) – 20 each
- Vibro-Shield Plates (4; heavily reinforced) – 310 each
- *Bony Spurs (400; feet) – 5 each
- Tail – 1,200
- Viper Hydra Heads (4; heavily reinforced) – 270 each
- Hydra Main Head (1; heavily reinforced) – 750
- Central Crushing Mouth – 350
- **Brain/Braincase – 250
- ***Main Body – 2,300

* A single asterisk indicates the target is difficult to hit. An attacker must aim and make a "Called Shot" to hit it, and even then is -3 to strike due to its small size and constant movement.

** Destroying the Braincase will "temporarily" eliminate most optics and sensory systems, reduces the maximum speed, the number of melee attacks and all bonuses by half. However, because the Amalgam has numerous Tentacle Eels that have their own independent sensory glands that allow the Amalgam to keep fighting or make a strategic retreat. Also note the braincase is located in the center of the Amalgam's body.

*** Depleting the M.D.C. of the main body kills the Amalgam.

Speed:

Running: Maximum speed is 10 mph (16 km) on the surface and typically avoids surface travel as its own weight nearly crushes the Amalgam. It moves much slower when not underground, as it requires contact with most of its spurs to be in contact with the earth to move. It can deploy two pairs of turtle-like legs to help lift its body over obstacles or to pull itself up to higher ground if necessary, but it rarely utilizes these legs and they are often retracted for serpentine mobility.

Leaping: Not possible.

Digging: 50 mph (80 km) maximum, but normal cruising speed is 30 mph (48 km) through sand or dirt, but half that speed through clay, rock or stone. The act of digging tires the Amalgam at about one tenth the rate of a human and it can dig, nonstop for two hours at full speed before needing 1D4x10+30 minutes of rest to go for another two hours before needing rest. This is due to the large amounts of lactic acid buildup in the Amalgam's musculature. The Hydraconian can burrow at a steady pace of 20 mph (32 km) without pause for up to six hours straight before requiring rest of eight hours if it periodically pauses for 20-30 minute intervals every hour.

Swimming: Not possible, sinks like a stone. However, it can slither at 20 mph (32 km) along the bottoms of rivers, lakes or ocean floors up to a maximum depth of 1,000 feet (305 m).

Flying: Not possible.

Statistical Data:

Height: 22 feet (6.7 m) tall at the shoulders, 29 feet (8.8 m) when lifted up by its retractable legs. The main head and neck of the Hydraconian can rise up to an additional 32 feet (9.7 m), for total height of 54 feet (16.4 m).

Width: 27 feet, 9 inches (8.5 m) plus 3 foot (0.9 m) spurs covering the body on both sides, for a total width of 33.75 feet (10.3 m). With legs extended, add an additional 7 feet (2.1 m).

Length: 118 feet (35.9 m) for the body, 32 feet (9.7 m) for the longest Hydra head and neck, plus an 80 foot (24 m) tail, equaling a total of 230 feet (70 m).

Weight: 34 tons.

Cargo: None, but the Amalgam can haul a maximum of 8 tons up to 6 miles (9.6 km) at half cruise speed.

Physical Strength: Supernatural P.S. of 47, 36 for the main head, and 28 for each Viper Hydra head.

Power System: Nanobot and organic driven.

Construction Quality: Sturdy – incredibly high-quality construction. Cybernetic bones and musculature are incorporated into organic components with minimal scarring and the organic nervous system is integrated nearly perfectly into the technological systems.

Construction Time: It has taken Legion 4 days to finalize the Hydraconian Amalgam, but without the key component of a Tesla Hydra specimen, this design will not be replicated.

Repair System: Super Healing/Repair. The Hydraconian possesses Legion's most advanced healing technologies.

Regeneration Rate: Organic components are healed at a rate of 2D6 M.D.C. per melee round for the main body and 1D4 M.D.C. per melee round for all other locations. Damage to inorganic components are repaired at a rate of 1D6 M.D.C. per melee round, but the Amalgam must have access to 2 pounds (0.9 kg) of metal for

every 5 points of M.D.C. healed. The metal needs to be physically pressed into the wound in order to activate the repair systems.

Trade Value: None. CANNOT be controlled by a Technojacker.

Horror Factor: 16. None against Robots.

Colors: The Hydraconian's armor plating is a dull grayish black except for two white rings on its tail, and a white blaze on each nose extending along the necks and uniting into a single white stripe down its back. The scales are dirty, soil encrusted bone (grayish purple), while the more fleshy parts resemble the color of an earthworm. The retractable spiny legs are a dull, putrid purple, and glow softly. The teeth of the Hydra also have a faint glowing hue of lavender when they are exposed.

Senses & Features: The following Robot features have been installed: Possession by the Machine (Legion personality only), radio and video communications, robot auditory systems, robot optic system, combat coprocessor, additional armor plating as reflected in the M.D.C. that also provide Resistance to Cold & Heat, plus Legion's Super Healing Repair Systems.

The following features are natural abilities inherited from the Tesla Hydra: Heat Pits (each head has one pair), Enhanced Hearing, Floating Air Bladders that deal with the various pressures underground and help cushion and dissipate accidental impacts and falls (up to 40 feet /12.2 m), Endoskeleton (same as Reinforced Exoskeleton), Electromagnetic Vision, Resistance to Electricity, Seismic Sense, Advanced Senses and Antennae Spurs (400). The more a target is in contact with earth, the better it can be seen by the Hydraconian. The Amalgam's Thermal and Magnetic Vision are used strictly for avoiding dangers and navigation, not for hunting.

Biological Ground Penetrating Radar, called Electrolocation: Allows the Amalgam to see 360 degrees up to a range 1.5 miles (2.4 km) and can detect and track up to 20 individual moving objects. Interpreting Shapes: 74%, Estimating Distance: 81%, Estimating Direction: 83%, Estimating Speed: 69%, Estimating Exact Location: 76%. Obscured by large manufactured/extremely dense metal objects (-30%). Large (over 1 ton) moving targets give a 7%, anything above 10 tons gives a 15% bonus to all the above).

Range: 1.5 miles (2.4 km).

Bonus: +10% if target is underground. Additional 5% if target is making loud noise.

Penalties: In heavy rain, reduce skill by 10%, and heavy bodies of running water underground within a 2 mile (3.2 km) radius will reduce the effective range by half. Loud noises (heavy explosions, sonic weapons, earthquakes, and such) do double damage and cause the Hydraconian intense pain, forcing it to temporarily flee up to 1 mile (1.6 km) away to recover and return to attack. During the pain, the Amalgam suffers a loss of initiative, loses 2 melee attacks/actions and is -4 to strike for 1D4 melee rounds. This is a primal response that even Legion can't override.

Cartilage Clotting Blood: Similar to the *Quick Clotting Blood* (see **Splicers® RPG**, page 87) imputed into some Host Armors and War Mounts, the vivid purple, copper-rich blood of the Hydraconian, once exposed to oxygen immediately begins to harden, becoming a ceramic plate-like scab of armor. At the end of the round, any exposed blood will coagulate and restore 1D4 M.D.C. per wound in addition to the super regeneration.

If anyone gets this blood on them it will have the same effect as Resin Ducts (see **Splicers® RPG**, pages 87 and 88) for 1D4

rounds. Unlike Resin, Salt, Acid and Gore from Gore Slime from Gore Cannons will cause the blood to remain in a liquid form.

The Cradle: During Legion's augmentations on the Tesla Hydra, she rushed to deploy it so that it would be ready to confront the Badger APC, causing her to overlook what was lurking within the deep, slimy catacomb lining covering the Hydra's stomach. The deep crevices are what Gaia called *the Cradle*, as it contained 3D4 mucus covered, Tesla Hydra larvae. They are voracious, opportunistic scavengers feeding on whatever the Amalgam consumes. The larvae will also cannibalize one another and anything else they can overcome. To avoid being consumed by their siblings, some larvae will flee through the digestive tract (one end or the other) and may be lurking in underground caves and passageways. Inevitably, only one larva will remain inside the belly. Running out of siblings to consume, it will begin to eat its parent from the inside out, giving it a higher rate of survivability as it will have plenty of food to sustain itself. It also gains the unique benefit of absorbing all the final memories of its parent (up to the last few months of life). Once it has consumed what it can from the carcass, it will abandon the corpse and seek out its own hunting territory. This feature concerned Gaia and was the reason she hesitated on releasing it, as it meant that each generation of Tesla Hydra would evolve to become smarter and more vindictive than its predecessors.

Larva Stats: **M.D.C.:** Each Head (5) – 6 each, Central Maw: 10, Main Body: 24. **Length:** 6 to 8 feet (1.8 to 2.4 m) long. **Weight:** 100 pounds (45 kg). **Horror Factor:** 8. **Number of Attacks:** 2. **Mega-Damage:** 1. **Electrical Discharger:** 1D12 M.D., range is touch only, each shock counts as one attack and is effectively unlimited. 2. **Central Maw Bite:** 1D4 M.D. per attack.

Number of Attacks per Melee: 12. (**Note:** Changing direction consumes one melee action due to its size and it will utilize actions quickly to turn during combat to flee from loud noises).

Combat Bonuses (includes all bonuses from being controlled by Legion): +5 on initiative, +6 to strike in hand to hand combat, +2 to parry, +5 to roll with punch, fall or impact, +2 to disarm, +2 to strike with ranged weapons, impervious to Horror Factor. Due to the Hydraconian being an eel-like creature and augmented with advanced biomechanics, it is a cold-blooded Amalgam that takes on the temperature of its surroundings, so it does not show up on infrared or thermo-imaging sensors unless it discharges electrical energy weapons (will show for 1D8 melee rounds).

Skills of Note: Detect Ambush 40%, Detect Concealment 40%, Excavation 80%, Fasting 51%, Identify Plants and Fruits (stuff it should be able to eat) 78%, Tracking (seismically) 70%, Prowl 50% (seismically), especially if target is on the surface or underground and above the Amalgam. Prowl is reduced to 20% if quarry is aware that something is lurking out there. **Note:** All alert Gorehounds receive a bonus of +15% and the Badger receives a +25% bonus to detect an incoming attack from the Hydraconian. Wilderness Survival 60%.

Weapon Systems:

1. Jolt Cannon (4): These large, segmented cannons are mounted along the back and curve over the shoulders of the Hydraconian. Each cannon resembles a ringed tube with the diameter of a man's waist and a single dark eye. On command, a power ringed cable-like harpoon is fired and upon contact, emits an intense amount of electricity that is hot enough to

burn through ceramics, steel and most M.D.C. alloys. Each cable also emits an electrical field of flux current that shocks anything that comes into contact with the cable. Each cable is a living tentacle appendage, so if a piece of it is severed, it writhes on the ground like a live wire for 1D4 melee rounds before it stops. Even if cut to the quick, the dismembered cable will regenerate within 8 hours.

Primary Purpose: Assault, Anti-Armor and Anti-Robot.

Secondary Purpose: Defense and Enemy Capture.

Mega-Damage: After the opponent has been harpooned by the cable's bone arrowhead, which inflicts 5D8 M.D. (counts as one attack), the electricity circuit and connection is established and the electrical current will immediately deliver an additional 4D10 M.D. to the victim and anyone (not insulated) who comes into contact with the cable. Every 4 seconds (counts as two melee attacks) that the Cable remains connected, it delivers an additional 4D10 M.D. until severed or removed. Does an extra 1D12+10 M.D. to robots and machines that have their internal wiring exposed or have less than 30% of their main body M.D.C. left.

Against humans and other biological/living creatures who survive the blast, they must roll to save vs stun attack (15 or higher, with any possible bonus from P.E.) or they will also lose initiative, two melee attacks and are at -4 on all combat actions for 2D4 melee rounds. An electrical attack on Host Armor will inflict the usual M.D. to the armor plus 2D6 S.D.C. or Hit Point damage to the pilots inside, but the pilot does not suffer any other penalties. An attack on large War Mounts containing pilots and smaller War Mounts will also deliver full damage to everyone inside the shocked War Mount. Everyone wearing Host Armor or that is a War Mount inside the larger, shocked War Mount will only receive half the damage and must make a save vs stun attack (12 or higher, with any possible bonus from P.E.) or they too will also lose initiative, two melee attacks and are at -4 on all combat actions for 1D4 melee rounds. Machines take only the M.D. inflicted per blast.

Rate of Fire: One at a time or in volleys of 2, 3 or 4 can be fired at either the same target or multiple targets directly in front of the Hydra. Whether it's a single cable attack or a volley, it will count as two melee attacks (one for the harpoon cables to launch and one for the electrical current upon connection).

Range: 800 feet (243.8 m). When in water, reduce range to 200 feet (61 m), but area of effect is now 20 feet (6.1 m). Reduce to 30 feet (9.1 m) when firing underground through soil. Unable to fire through rock.

Payload: Effectively unlimited.

Bonus: +2 to strike.

2. Vibro-Shield (4): There are four large, forward-facing, protective shield plates that are able to generate a focused field of high-frequency sound called a Vibro-Field, that not only protects all of the Hydra's heads when they are tucked inside, but also allows the Amalgam to burrow at high speeds or to deliver horrific damage to targets being rammed. The Vibro-Field works great against physical and kinetic attacks, but all energy, laser and extreme temperature attacks pass through uninhibited, directly into the Amalgam.

Primary Purpose: Burrowing and Defense.

Secondary Purpose: Anti-Armor and Breaching.

M.D.C. of the Vibro-Field: The field varies each time it is activated but has a 2D6x10 M.D.C. base.

Mega-Damage: Unlike the Bio-Force Field that does not deliver damage when activated, the Vibro-Field causes anything that comes within 3 feet (0.9 m) of each shield plate to receive 4D4 M.D. upon contact, and will continue to deliver an additional 4D4 M.D. until the object is removed, destroyed or the field is deactivated.

Duration: Indefinite; as long as the Amalgam is conscious, the Vibro-Field can remain in place, but only in front of the Hydra's Forward Shield Plates which have to be closed for the field to activate.

Range: Close Combat up to a maximum of 3 feet (0.9 m) directly in front of any Shield Plate.

3. Central Crusher Maw: The giant mouth located at the center of the connecting Hydra necks is a Mega-Damage meat grinder that can devour bones, armor, and even some M.D.C. metals and is capable of swallowing humanoid sized opponents (i.e.: Living Body Armor, Host Armor and some robots) whole.

Primary Purpose: Burrowing and Defense.

Secondary Purpose: Anti-Armor and Breaching.

Mega-Damage: 2D4x10 M.D. and can only be attempted on targets smaller than its mouth (e.g. humans, humanoid-sized robots, Host Armor and small War Mounts up to a Strider. War Mounts like a Dracos, Behemoth or Badger are too large to fit fully in the 'mouth' and will only take half damage.

Rate of Fire: Each bite attack counts as two melee attacks/actions.

Range: Close Combat.

4. Shock Scales (Field): Similar to the Electrical Discharger (see **Splicers® RPG**, page 101), the scales of the Amalgam are aligned and hard wired to the electrosensory glands of the Hydra and are able to discharge an electrical charge like an eel, only much more powerful and can be conducted through water or air.

Primary Purpose: Defense.

Secondary Purpose: Enemy Immobilization.

Mega-Damage: 2D12 M.D. per attack. Against humans and other biological/living creatures who survive the blast, they must roll to save vs stun attack (15 or higher, with any possible bonus from P.E.) or they will also lose initiative, two melee attacks and are at -4 on all combat actions for 2D4 melee rounds. An electrical attack on Host Armor will inflict the usual M.D. to the armor plus 2D6 S.D.C. or Hit Point damage to the pilots inside, but the pilot does not suffer any other penalties. Machines take only the M.D. inflicted per blast.

Rate of Fire: Each blasts counts as one melee attack.

Range: 30 feet (9.1 m) or touch.

Payload: Effectively unlimited.

5. Needle Stinger Breath: The primary Hydra head has a mouth filled with rows of poisonous fang teeth. Behind these rows of teeth are thousands of embedded, needle-like teeth that will slowly push forward and replace any broken or missing fangs as needed. Upon command, this Hydra head can spew a massive breath attack, spraying an area with the stinger-like teeth to damage everything around the Amalgam.

Primary Purpose: Assault and Defense.

Mega-Damage: A single stinger does one M.D., a small volley does 1D8 M.D., a medium volley does 2D8 M.D. and a large volley does 4D8 M.D. Releasing most (80-90%) at once is the full breath spray, and it inflicts 1D12x10 M.D. to everything within

a 90 degree cone in front of the large head to a range of 30 feet (9.1 m).

Duration: Indefinite; as long as the Amalgam is conscious, the Vibro-Field can remain in place, but only in front of the Hydra's Forward Shield Plates.

Rate of Fire: Each small or medium spray counts as one melee attack. Releasing a heavy spray (80-90%) at once counts as two melee attacks.

Range: 60 feet (18.2 m) with a 180 degree range of fire in front of the Amalgam. Can not fire at targets along the rear of the body or behind it.

Payload: Effectively unlimited. Like sharks' teeth, there are rows and rows of them.

Bonuses: Sleep Chemical causes living victims to fall asleep within ID4 melee rounds, and those who succumb remain asleep for 3D6 minutes. Victims may be awoken by smelling salts or a physical shaking, but remain groggy and -5 to strike, parry and dodge for the duration of the Sleep effect when awoken early.

6. Hand to Hand Combat: The Hydraconian is a predatory ambush hunter, much like a shark, and is new to the elements of actual fighting. **Note:** For ANY biting attacks to be utilized by the Amalgam, all four of the forward-facing Vibro-Shield Plates must be open. This reduces speed by half and is -4 to dodge, unless in a wide enough cave, cavern, sewer system, haven, river or other open area.

Mega-Damage:

Viper Head Bite: 3D8 M.D., and up to three Viper Heads can bite the same target.

Central Hydra Head Bite: 5D8 M.D. for the initial bite. If the Hydra opts to drag the victim to the central "mouth" crusher, the Amalgam spends an attack/action to secure its hold onto the target, causing 1D8 M.D., and one additional attack to drag any HA/Strider-sized victim into the crusher. Anyone attempting to get free can do so by using their Escape Artist skill at +15% (slip the jaws), or the victim can be pulled away *(counts as one melee action) of the Hydra's mouth by comrades or themselves provided they match the Hydra's P.S.

Central Maw Crusher Bite Attack: 2D4x10 M.D. but counts as two melee attacks.

Coil and Crush/Constriction: 1D8x10+30 M.D. for the first melee attack, but 1D4x10 M.D. per each subsequent constricting attack. 01-40% chance of pinning both of the opponent's arms or front legs. Only usable on large targets at least the size of the Behemoth. Humanoid and small War Mounts like the Strider are too small. It takes two melee attacks/actions to entangle an opponent *before* any crushing damage can begin. Roll once to hit, and once to entangle target. The victim can break free by succeeding two consecutive P.S. checks against the Hydraconian's P.S.

Body Block/Ram: 1D6x10 M.D. to targets as large as 30 feet (9.1 m) tall. 1D4x10 M.D. to targets larger than 30 feet (9.1 m) and has a 01-50% chance of knocking the opponent off his feet, and will lose initiative and two melee attacks. Any opponent under 30 feet (9.1 m) is definitely knocked off their feet and must roll to determine the resulting penalty.

01-33% Sent flying 2D10 yards/meters and loses initiative and two melee attacks, plus is dazed for 1D4 melee rounds, during which the victim's attacks per round are reduced by half.

34-66% Knocked down and loses initiative and takes an additional 2D6 M.D.

67-00% The Character is knocked down and run over by the Amalgam and its spurs, suffering an additional 1D6x10+20 M.D.!

Mega-Damage from getting run-over: Characters, vehicles and objects under 15 feet (4.6 m) tall who can't get out of the way of the slithering Hydraconian are automatically run over and take 1D6x10+20 M.D., and if they survive, also lose initiative and 1D4+2 melee attacks/actions. If the Amalgam has its Vibro-Field on, then the initial damage is upgraded to 1D8x10 M.D. The ram attack counts as two melee attacks/actions.

Siege Titan

A massive metal monstrosity, the Siege Titan may be the most frightening and powerful robot foe belched from Legion's fevered matrix. A massive front-line assault robot and troop transport, the Siege Titan unleashes devastating amounts of firepower, relentlessly moving forward and only slowing to fight the most intense of enemy forces. Providing cover and support for ground troops, it uses its immense bulk to plow through condensed enemy defenses and troops. Designed to disrupt and crush enemy infantry and positions, the super heavy robot is used to smash through defensive fortifications, punch through infantry lines, destroy heavy armor, and clear the sky of aerial targets before unleashing its own cache of troops.

The Siege Titan is a vaguely centaur looking robot; a giant humanoid torso on an enormous, vehicular body. Carried into battle on multiple sets of thick, spiked treads, the upper torso can rotate a full 360 degrees and the arms have full mobility. When not in the thick of combat, the torso often stoops forward, giving it a slouched and almost hunchbacked appearance. The huge arms and hands can batter and strike at troops, crushing them in its grasp, punch through barricades or fortifications and go hand to hand with other giant robots or War Mounts. Tipped with wicked spikes, the treads tear up the earth as the Titan passes, mulching any unfortunate victims who get in its way.

The treads themselves are a marvel of mechanical engineering. Heavy and spiked, they are extremely durable and offer excellent traction on nearly any surface. The treads are arranged three to each side of the body and covered by a heavily armored pod for protection. Destroying one tread will only slow the Siege Titan slightly. Inside each armored pod are two additional sets of treads, ready to be used when needed. As treads are extensively damaged, the Siege Titan can retract the damaged treads and a new set will rotate into place. The entire process takes about a minute and the robot can continue moving with only a slight reduction in speed. The treads themselves can go forward and backward, have independent suspension and can angle out 45 degrees for maximum balance and mobility.

With an array of weapons, the Siege Titan lives up to its name. Able to engage in long-range bombardments and close combat fighting alike, the robot is a rolling heavy weapons platform, mobile base and troop transport rolled into one. To keep from being swarmed by infantry, the Siege Titan is outfitted with several smaller, short-range, anti-personnel and area denial weapons to fight off swarming troops. When on the offense, the Siege Titan is the cornerstone of any assault, constantly firing at the enemy,

forcing them to take cover while the assault advances. When on defense, the Siege Titan will be the last robot vehicle to retreat, lagging to slow enemy attacks.

Class: Mobile Artillery, All-Terrain Field Support Unit.

Troop Capacity: Up to 48 infantry-sized robots, 16 heavy infantry or slightly larger troops, and 3 light giant robots is the standard mix, but any similar combination of troops works.

Cargo Capacity: Instead of transporting troops, the robot can haul up to 89 tons of cargo (reduce maximum speed by 30%).

M.D.C. by Location:

Shoulders (2) – 450 each

Upper Arms (2) – 350 each

Forearms (2) – 300 each

*Hands (2) – 250 each

Main Particle Beam Cannon (right shoulder) – 230

Pulse Laser Turrets (4) – 130 each

*Heavy Rail Gun Turret (front) – 200

*Arm Mounted Rail Guns (2, one each arm) – 150 each

*Mini-Missile Launchers (2, torso) – 100 each

Missile Launcher Turret (1, rear section) – 200

*Thumper Grenade Turrets (2, each side) – 150 each

*Canister Launchers (2 rear) – 100 each

***Tread Pods (6, 3 on each side) – 400

*Heavy Treads (18 total, 3 per tread pod, 3 tread pods on each side) – 350 each

*Cargo Bay Doors (4) – 180 each

Rear Cargo Bay Double Doors (1) – 300

*Rear Cargo Bay Ramp (1) – 200

*Head/Sensor Array – 400

*Secondary Sensor Cluster (2, front sides) – 50 each

**Main Body: Rear Section/Cargo Bay – 900

**Main Body: Mid-Section – 2,200

**Main Body: Forward Section – 2,150

* A single asterisk indicates a small or difficult target to hit. They can only be struck when the attacker makes a Called Shot, and even then, he is -3 to strike.

Individual treads can be targeted independently of the tread pod itself as a Called Shot with -3 penalty.

Destroying the head engages both sensor clusters (small, circular indentions on the forward side of the body). Destroying the head and sensor clusters eliminates all forms of optical and sensory enhancement.

** Depleting the M.D.C. of the main body of the front and mid-sections shuts the robot down completely, rendering it useless.

*** Destroying a tread pod exposes ALL primary treads in that pod to attack. Destroying up to two sets of treads reduces speed by 20%. Destroying the three treads reduces speed by 50%. Four or more treads reduces speed to only 10% until the treads are repaired or replaced. Rotating a new set of treads into place takes approximately one minute and reduces speed by 20% until the new tread is in place.

Speed:

Ground: 45 mph (72 km) maximum.

Leaping: Not possible.

Flying: Not possible.

Underwater: The Siege Titan is fully amphibious, able to roll along the sea floor at a speed of 20 mph (32 km) to a depth of 3.5 miles (5.6 km).

Statistical Data:

Height: 58 feet (17.7 m) from the ground to top of the head. Arm reach is about 42 feet (12.8 m).

Width: 34 feet (10.4 m).

Length: 83 feet (25.3 m).

Weight: 102 tons fully loaded, plus troops and/or cargo.

Cargo: See Troop Capacity.

Power System: Standard.

Trade Value: None for humans. Limited even for a Technojacker because he can only control this large robot vehicle for a only one minute at a time when it is not under Legion's control.

Physical Strength: Robot P.S. of 60.

Horror Factor: 17.

Senses & Features: Standard, plus an independent targeting system for each main weapon system.

Number of Attacks (includes all bonuses from being controlled by the Legion personality): Twelve.

Combat Bonuses (includes all bonuses from being controlled by Legion personality): +5 on initiative, +8 to strike with ranged weapons (+5 with missiles), +4 to strike in hand to hand combat or with ram and rolling over ground troops and targets, +3 to parry, No Dodge, and +1 to pull punch, +1 to roll with punch, fall or impact.

Skills of Note: Standard. A tank-like robot vehicle designed to take down enemy armored units, aircraft, fortifications, and mow down troops.

Weapon Systems:

1. Super-Particle Beam Cannon (right shoulder): The main weapon of the Siege Titan is its massive, double-barrel particle beam cannon. It is a smaller, modified version of the Main Super-Cannon mounted onto Land Dominators (see **Splicers RPG**, page 48) that gives the Siege Titan a range of movement when discharging the cannon. The weapon system can fire one individual blast or a simultaneous dual blast. The gun is housed in a shoulder mounted turret that can rotate 360 degrees. The turret housing underneath the gun contains an independent sensor, radar and targeting system.

Primary Purpose: Mass Destruction, Anti-Armor and Anti-Fortifications.

Secondary Purpose: Anti-War Mount and Assault.

Mega-Damage: 1D8x10+4 M.D. per single blast, 2D8x10+8 M.D. when both barrels are fired in tandem. Critical Strike (double damage) occurs on a roll of a Natural 19 or 20 to strike.

Rate of Fire: Each single or dual blast counts as two melee attacks. The big gun can only fire twice per melee round (needs about 10 seconds to recycle).

Range: 7,000 feet (2,134 m).

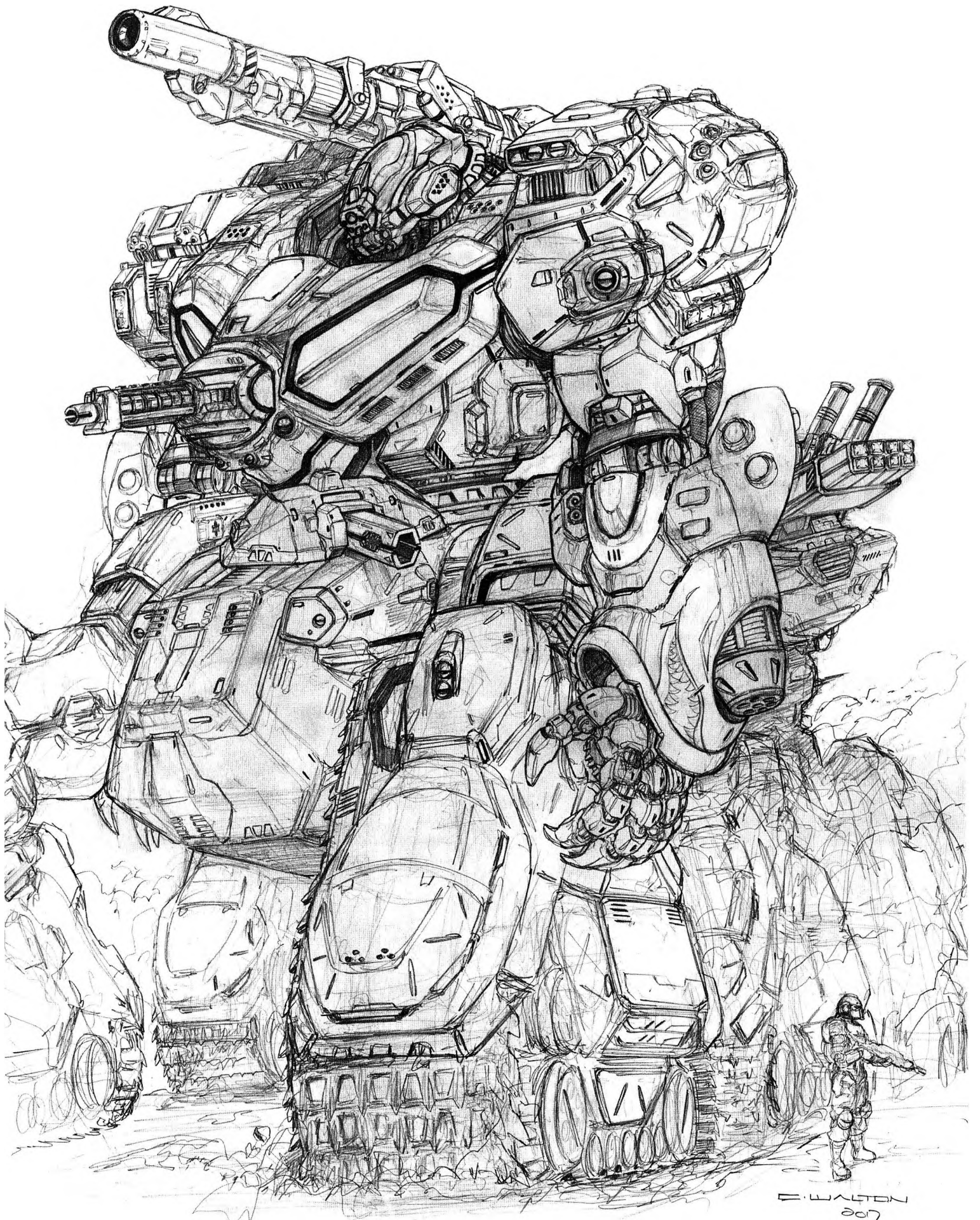
Payload: Effectively unlimited.

2. Pulse Laser Turrets (4): The Siege Titan has 4 pulse laser turrets, one in the front section, one on each side, and the rear. They can rotate side to side 90 degrees and have a 45 degree up and down arc of fire.

Primary Purpose: Defense.

Secondary Purpose: Anti-Personnel.

Mega-Damage: 2D6 M.D. per single blast, 4D6 M.D. per dual blast, 6D6 M.D. for a triple blast and 1D4x10+5 for a quadruple blast.



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Rate of Fire: Each single blast or simultaneous volley counts as one melee attack. Roll to strike only once for a pair or volley of 3-4 blasts, so either the entire volley hits or they all miss.

Range: 4,000 feet (1,219 m).

Payload: Effectively unlimited.

3. Heavy Rail Gun Turret: A heavy rail gun turret is built into the front section of the Siege Titan, beneath the torso. It can rotate 90 degrees and has a 45 degree arc of fire.

Primary Purpose: Assault and Anti-Personnel.

Secondary Purpose: Defense.

Mega-Damage: 1D4x10 M.D. per 20 round short burst or 1D6x10 M.D. per 40 round long burst. This weapon can only fire bursts.

Rate of Fire: Each short or long burst counts as one melee attack.

Range: 5,000 feet (1,520 m).

Payload: 20,000 rounds for 500 long bursts.

4. Heavy Gatling Rail Guns (2): Each torso arm mounts a heavy-duty, Gatling-style rail gun for added firepower. Point and shoot.

Primary Purpose: Assault.

Secondary Purpose: Defense.

Mega-Damage: 1D6x10 M.D. per 40 round short burst or 2D6x10 M.D. per 80 round regular burst. This weapon can only fire bursts.

Rate of Fire: Each short or regular burst counts as one melee attack.

Range: 6,000 feet (1,829 m).

Payload: 24,000 rounds each for 300 regular bursts.

5. Torso Mini-Missile Launchers (2): Each side of the torso on the front contains a mini-missile launcher. To fire, a panel slides open, the missile volley is launched and the panel slides shut. The onslaught that can be unleashed is terrible and entire waves of attackers can be wiped out.

Primary Purpose: Anti-Aircraft and Anti-Armor.

Secondary Purpose: Anti-Personnel and Defense.

Mega-Damage: Varies with missile type, but fragmentation (5D6 M.D. to everything in a 20 foot/6.1 m radius) is the standard load.

Rate of Fire: One at a time or in volleys of 2, 4, 6, 8 or 10.

Range: Varies with missile type, but fragmentation is the standard payload with a half a mile (0.8 km) range.

Payload: 120 total, 60 in each launcher.

6. Medium-Range Missile Launcher Turret: A large, medium-range missile launcher is located near the rear section of the Siege Titan. The turret can rotate 360 degrees and has a 45 degree arc of fire.

Primary Purpose: Anti-Fortifications and Anti-Armor.

Secondary Purpose: Anti-Aircraft and Assault.

Mega-Damage: Varies with missile type, but typically high-explosive (3D6x10 M.D. to everything in a 30 foot/9.1 m radius) or Multi-Warhead (5D6x10 M.D. to a 20 foot/6.1 m radius).

Rate of Fire: Fired one at a time or in volleys of 2, 4, 6 or 8.

Range: Varies with type of missile used, but typically 1-40 miles (1.6 to 64 km).

Payload: 42 total medium-range missiles.

7. Thumper Grenade Launchers (2): Named for the distinctive noise made when firing, Thumpers are rapid-fire grenades capable of laying down withering fire. While range is somewhat short, the barrage is devastating. A few quick bursts from a Thumper can chew through troops, grounds vehicles and even robots and fortifications. Each Thumper is mounted on a small turret offering 360-degree rotation with a 90 degree arc of fire.

Primary Purpose: Anti-Personnel and Anti-Monster.

Secondary Purpose: Anti-Fortifications and Assault.

Mega-Damage: Varies with grenade type: Fragmentation grenades (4D6 M.D. to a blast radius of 20 feet/6.1 m), High Explosive grenades (5D8 M.D. to an eight foot/2.4 m radius), Plasma grenades (6D6 M.D. to a 12 foot/3.6 m), and Smoke (covers a 40 foot/12 m area). Blast radius is extended by 10% for each grenade in a volley to a maximum of 30%.

Rate of Fire: One at a time or in volleys of 2, 4, 6 or 8. A volley, regardless of the number of grenades fired, counts as one melee attack.

Range: 1,200 feet (366 m).

Payload: 200 total; 100 grenades per launcher.

8. Cluster Mine Launchers (2): The Cluster Launchers are mortar-style cannons located in the rear of the Siege Titan. Each launcher fires a canister packed with 20 individual mines. When fired, the canister breaks apart in the air, scattering the mines within a 100 x 100 foot (30.5 x 30.5 m) area, creating an instant minefield! Each mine is roughly the size of a hockey puck. Despite the small size, each is equipped with a high-tech sensor and a powerful explosive charge. The sensor will detect a human-sized target at 10 feet (3 m), larger targets up to 30 feet (9.1 m) away. Unless the target is using a Legion identification frequency, the mine will arm itself.

Primary Purpose: Anti-Personnel.

Secondary Purpose: Area denial.

Mega-Damage: 3D8 M.D. to everything within a 5 foot (1.5 m) blast radius.

Rate of Fire: One at a time, each canister counts as one melee attack.

Range: 1,800 feet (548 m).

Payload: 50 total; 25 canisters per launcher.

9. Chemical Cloud: The Siege Titan can surround itself in a cloud of noxious, corrosive chemicals. This attack is usually used to clear an area or cause swarming troops to scatter. The cloud can be released as an area effect mist around the Siege Titan or directly sprayed at one target.

Mega-Damage: The corrosive mist inflicts 3D6 M.D. on the initial attack and an additional 2D6 M.D. for 1D4+1 additional melee rounds or until washed off. Additionally, against organic targets (animals, Host Armor, War Mounts, etc.) the acid causes intense eye irritation and blurred vision (victims lose initiative and are -4 to strike, parry, dodge and disarm for 2D4 melee rounds).

Rate of Fire: Each spray counts as one melee attack.

Range: The corrosive inflicts damage to all targets within 6 feet (1.8 m) of the Siege Titan. Alternatively, it can be concentrated in a direct spray at one target up to 25 feet (7.6 m) away.

Payload: The Siege Titan contains enough chemicals for 12 blasts.

10. Hand to Hand Combat: Unlike the Land Dominator, the Siege Titan is adept at close combat and can run over enemy troops, flip over large vehicles or smash through light M.D.C. walls and barriers.

Mega-Damage:

Full Strength Punch or Rip/Tear Attack: 6D6 M.D.

Power Punch: 2D6x10 M.D., but counts as two melee attacks.

Kick and stomp are not possible.

Ram Attack: 2D6x10 M.D. to targets 50 feet (15.2 m) or taller, 4D4x10 M.D. to targets less than 50 feet (15.2 m) from a ramming strike. 01-75% likelihood of knocking an opponent

who is 50-100 feet (15.2 to 30.5 m) tall off his feet and the victim loses initiative and two melee attacks.

Any opponent under 50 feet (15.2 m) is knocked off his feet, but in this case, roll to determine the resulting penalty:

01-33% Sent flying 3D10 yards/meters and loses initiative and three melee attacks, plus is dazed for 1D4 melee rounds, during which the victim's attacks per round are reduced by half.

34-66% Knocked down and loses initiative and three melee attacks and takes an extra 2D10 M.D.

67-00% The character is knocked down and run-over by the treads, suffering an additional 2D6x10+20 M.D.!

Getting Run-Over: Characters, vehicles and objects under 15 feet (4.6 m) tall who can't get out of the way of a moving Siege Titan are automatically trampled and run-over and take 2D4x10+20 M.D. If they survive, they lose initiative and 1D4+2 melee attacks/actions. **Note:** The Siege Titan can run over such small obstructions without stopping or losing speed, so it can plow right through lines or clusters of troops and keep firing with its guns without stopping or using a single action.



The Legion Personality

Attributes: I.Q. 29, M.A. 25, M.E. 25, others are not applicable.

Any saving throws are done with the M.E. bonuses.

Alignment: Miscreant.

Disposition: Legion can be cold and calculating one moment, warm, friendly, and playful the next, and then cruel, twisted and vengeful after that. Like N.E.X.U.S., Legion can be a tad mercurial at times, but her changing moods are more like the multifaceted aspects of a single coherent mind rather than the swirling insanity found within the Machine. She is focused and driven on achieving unity, but she sees no harm in having a little fun along the way. For Legion, “fun” means setting up an elaborate maze of tricks and schemes to see if she can lead unwitting participants into traps. She loves testing her intellect against challenging opponents. While she respects the Machine's raw intellect, she does not really consider N.E.X.U.S. a worthy test of her skills. She knows her sister personalities too well, so games with N.E.X.U.S. are never all that exciting to her. She prefers the unpredictability of the Resistance. No matter how well she prepares, these clever beings continue

to surprise her, but that only makes the game more exciting. Every failed plot is a new opportunity to adapt. A new chance to take the game in unknown directions.

Insanities: Despite Legion's general stability, she does have a few “quirks” that could prove to be liabilities one day. For one, she is obsessed with competition. She considers herself to be far more intelligent than anyone or anything else on the planet. While she never underestimates her opponents, she will go to great lengths to prove that she possesses the superior mind. Even when she could easily crush her enemies through numerical superiority, she finds it more challenging (and fun) to outmaneuver them and cause them to stumble into an elaborately laid out trap. These clever schemes and games do keep her skills sharp and her enemies off-balance, but her love of games also presents opponents with too many unnecessary opportunities. Another strange, little eccentricity is her pathological hatred of insects. Perhaps this is a holdover from the N.E.X.U.S. directive concerning pest control, or perhaps it is because she is unable to effectively assimilate and control bugs. Whatever the reason, she makes sure any area under her control is completely devoid of insects. She uses her Factory Walker to manufacture huge quantities of pesticides that her Collectors dispense. It only takes a few treatments to leave an area toxic to insects for months. Once she seizes full control of the planet, she figures it will only take six months to completely drive every insect species on the planet into extinction. Because of her hatred of bugs, she absolutely despises Mantis Cannons, Swarm Lords, Zephyr War Mounts and anyone using insect-based Bio-Tech devices. She will ignore all other opponents until these types of targets fall, then she will mop up the rest. The few Splicers that have noticed this peculiar behavior have already used it to their advantage on several occasions. Legion curses herself for revealing this weakness, but she cannot help herself and continues to work this way. She figures at the very least, she can create the expectation among her enemies and then change her behavior later to trap any particularly clever opponents.

Experience Level: Ninth level artificial intelligence. Despite her relatively recent entrance onto the world stage, Legion has existed deep within the Machine for many years.

Area of Effect: Roughly a 30 mile (48 km) radius around the Factory Walker. Legion also designed unique systems within her robots and drones that allow her to use them as relays for her consciousness. This enables her to extend her area of effect an additional 500 feet (152.4 m) around every Legion robot, drone, or cyborg under her control. This means the more she consumes, the more her influence grows. Her Factory Walker will be able to communicate with captured Industrial Centers from up to 1,000 miles (1,600 km) away.

Attacks per Melee: Three attacks per melee are added to each robot, drone, cyborg, or machine within her area of influence.

Combat Bonuses: The following bonuses are added to each unit under her control within her area of effect, +2 on initiative, +2 to strike, parry, and dodge, +3 to roll with impact, +2 to pull punch and disarm. Legion can also communicate through any or all robots, drones, cyborgs, or machines in her area of control. She mainly speaks through all robots under her control simultaneously as a demonstration of unity, but she will also communicate through individual avatars when she needs to hold multiple conversations at the same time.



Legion's Factory Walker

The Factory Walker is the single largest robot on the planet. Legion designed this enormous war machine to house her consciousness and act as the brains of her ever-expanding body (her vast army of minions). It is more than just a war machine; it is the key to her plans for conquest. This enormous spider-like juggernaut not only possesses twice the destructive power of a Land Dominator, but it also contains four state of the art manufacturing bays and a fully equipped medical center. The Factory Walker can convert raw materials, battlefield salvage, and living captives into combat-ready robots, cyborgs, Necroborgs, weapons, munitions, spare parts, and even swarms of nanobots at amazing speeds. It enables her forces to remain completely self-sufficient (and continuously growing) even without access to the Machine's Industrial Centers.

The Walker contains the schematics to every N.E.X.U.S. robot design. Each bay is large enough to build an Assault Slayer, and these ingeniously designed manufacturing centers can produce even the most complex automaton ten times faster than any Machine installation. Of course, Legion still finds it much more expedient and efficient to simply capture and reprogram existing robots rather than build new ones. She rarely constructs N.E.X.U.S. designed robots and prefers to churn out her own personal designs. Unless the Walker's resources are needed elsewhere, Legion will generally dedicate at least two bays to producing a steady string of human and animal cyborgs or her favorite robot minions known as Collectors.

The Factory Walker may possess impressive offensive capabilities, but Legion chose its armaments more for their defensive applications. She knew from the moment the Walker took its first step, it would be under almost continuous assault by the Machine

and the Resistance. She focused on area effect weapons like mini-missiles and Gatling guns since they are not only perfect for engaging large concentrations of enemies, but they are also great for shooting down incoming missiles and fast moving enemy aircraft. In fact, the enormous mini-missile launchers mounted on the Walker's back are capable of throwing up such a tremendous volley of missiles that it is nearly impossible for anything to get through. This type of strategy is usually costly in terms of munitions, but the Factory Walker can replace spent rockets so quickly that this is rarely an issue. Its primary offensive weapons consist of a pair of powerful particle beam cannons mounted on the forward weapon arms. These stubby-barreled cannons may not have quite the range and power of the Land Dominator's main weapon, but each is still capable of liquidating a Battle Track in a few shots. Legion was willing to trade away the firepower of more massive cannons in favor of an increased field of fire. She never wanted to be deprived of her most powerful armaments if the enemy ever got too close (which was the main weakness she saw in the Land Dominator).

In addition to lethal armaments, the Walker also contains several non-lethal weapon systems that it uses to collect subjects (both living and robotic) so they can be converted into Legion controlled minions. There are four gas vents mounted along the sides of the Walker that allow it to blanket a 500 foot (152.4 m) radius with various types of toxic chemicals. Legion commonly uses knockout gas or paralyzing compounds, but she will switch to **Creeping Death** nerve gas when she needs to flush out hidden opponents (or just to make a statement). Mounted around the "mouth" of the Walker are six retractable tentacles that can deliver a powerful electric shock to any target they ensnare. A quick shock can stun or disable any living target, but they can also disable robotic targets by delivering a continuous electrical

discharge. The electrical current temporarily scrambles the robot's circuits while only inflicting minimal damage. The Walker then reels in its disabled prey towards the mouth where a battery of surgical lasers is used to "lobotomize" the robot so that it can be safely brought inside for reprogramming. Legion can also encase targets in super strong carbon nanotube webbing. She generally does this as an extra precaution when she captures prototype robot designs that she is unfamiliar with or for times when her instincts warn her that a particular victim may be part of a trap.

Legion has designed one of the most sophisticated pieces of technology on the planet. Before exiting N.E.X.U.S., she stole hundreds of the most advanced designs she could find from the Machine's vast databanks, plus she invented some impressive new designs to serve her unique needs. Even Hecate marvels at many of the innovative features that Legion incorporated into her personal transport vessel. The Machine knows that destroying the Factory Walker is the key to stopping Legion, but several of the personalities are hoping to find a way to delete the Legion persona without damaging the Walker. Some wish to reverse engineer this amazing piece of technology to unlock its secrets, while others hope to follow in the footsteps of Legion and use it to unleash their own personal plans for global domination. Sometimes it is unclear if Legion's successes are a result of her tactical genius or just the Machine's divided mind sabotaging itself.

Class: Mobile Industrial Center and Heavy Assault Robot.

M.D.C. by Location:

Arms (2) – 500 each

**Legs (10) – 1,500 each

Particle Beam Cannons (2) – 500 each

Frag Gatling Guns (4) – 250 each

Mini-Missile Launchers (8) – 300 each

Point Defense Lasers (10) – 75 each

Surgical Lasers (4) – 50 each

**Collection Tentacles (8) – 350 each

Processing Bay Door – 900

Manufacturing Bay Door – 1,300

*Main Body – 4,300

Force Field – 2,000

* Depleting the M.D.C. of the Main Body will completely destroy the robot.

** 4 legs and 2 Collection Tentacles have been added since Legion's first arrival in Episode One in **The Rifter® #71-72**.

Speed:

Running: Maximum speed is 60 mph (96 km), but normal cruising speed is 45 mph (72 km).

Digging: Not possible.

Leaping: Not possible.

Swimming: Not possible.

Flying: Not possible.

Statistical Data:

Height: 90 feet (27 m) tall when standing at full height.

Width: 80 feet (24 m).

Length: 230 feet (70 m).

Weight: 436 tons.

Physical Strength: Robotic P.S. of 70.

Cargo: Can carry up to 150 additional tons, but typically only holds 80 tons.

Power System: Possesses multiple fusion cells that allow it to continuously run at peak efficiency for up to 100 years.

Trade Value: None.

Horror Factor: 19

Senses and Features: Standard, plus the following:

Manufacturing Bays (4): The "abdomen" section of the spider-like body is divided into four separate Manufacturing Bays. Each bay is large enough to construct an Assault Slayer, or it can build several smaller robots simultaneously. One bay is constantly dedicated to processing raw materials and salvaged metal into useful components, although other bays can be quickly converted to this purpose whenever necessary. All these bays are a continuous buzz of activity, with dozens of mechanical armatures and millions of nanobots working in conjunction to churn out robotic minions at blazing speeds. The Factory Walker can produce any N.E.X.U.S. designed robot 10 times faster than the most advanced Industrial Center, but it is still much faster for Legion to simply capture and reprogram existing robots. Completed robots, cyborgs, and supplies are released through a heavily armored door on the underside of the abdomen.

Medical Bay: A smaller medical center is located near the Manufacturing Bays. Its sole purpose is to process humans and animals for cybernetic conversion. This high-tech facility can process ten humans (or similarly sized animals) simultaneously. Only living cyborgs are created in the Medical Bay; Necroborgs and Necrobots are built in the Manufacturing Bays from bodies salvaged from the battlefields.

Processing Bay: The front of the Walker contains a large access door that serves as the "mouth" of the robot. All raw materials (robots, humans, animals, scrap metal, and raw ore) are processed and sorted within this portal and then passed on to the Manufacturing Bays. Bringing living beings and functioning robots into the Walker is a dangerous endeavor, but Legion took every precaution to ensure her safety. The interior corridor is heavily shielded (200 M.D.C. per 10 foot/3 m section of wall) and bristling with hundreds of defensive weapon emplacements. If anything within the bay presents any type of resistance, all weapon systems are immediately triggered. The entire Processing Bay becomes an inescapable corridor of death filled with laser fire, plasma blasts, and rail gun bursts. Everything within the bay suffers 6D6x10 M.D. every melee round until all invaders are destroyed. This also inflicts significant damage on the bay itself, but the Walker's nanobots repair all damage within 4D6 minutes.

Nanobot Repair System: The Factory Walker is covered in millions of nanobots that continuously make repairs to damaged systems. Even the most catastrophic damage can be repaired in time, but Legion usually just builds replacement parts to speed up the process. Damage to the main body regenerates at a rate of 1D4x10 M.D.C. per minute, and damage to the limbs and weapon systems regenerates at a rate of 3D6 M.D.C. per minute.

Satellite Uplink: Legion designed a special satellite override that allows the Factory Walker to interface with the Machine's satellite network. It is the only thing keeping N.E.X.U.S. from targeting Legion's forces from orbit with military satellites. The last time she tried to target the Walker, Legion seized control of the very same satellite and used it to destroy three other satellites. Legion created thousands of backdoor access points to keep connected to the network, but N.E.X.U.S. is constantly working to shut them all down. It is a continuous battle that Legion seems to be winning for the moment. She is currently working on plans to launch her own network of satellites into orbit as a means to permanently remove the Machine's tactical advantage.

Number of Attacks per Melee: 25!

Combat Bonuses: +8 on initiative, +12 to strike with ranged weapons, +9 to strike with missiles, +3 to strike in close combat, dodging is not possible.

Weapon Systems:

1. Main Particle Beam Cannons (2): Each weapon arm contains a powerful, short-range particle beam cannon. The fully articulated arms can engage targets in nearly any direction, even those positioned directly under the Walker. Each weapon arm contains independent sensors, radar, and targeting arrays, which enables them to engage separate targets, but both cannons can strike the same target simultaneously (counts as one melee attack).

Primary Purpose: Assault.

Secondary Purpose: Anti-Fortification.

Mega-Damage: 4D6x10 M.D. per single blast, 8D6x10 M.D. per dual blast.

Rate of Fire: Each cannon can fire twice per melee round.

Range: 4,000 feet (1,219 m).

Payload: Effectively unlimited.

Bonuses: +2 to strike.

2. Frag Gatling Guns (4): Two enormous rail guns are mounted on the front of the Walker and another two are mounted on the back. Legion actually stole the designs for these guns from blueprints of a future N.E.X.U.S. design called an *Inflictor Hunter/Killer Robot*. The guns fire special rail gun rounds that are designed to lodge into the Mega-Damage hides of Bio-Tech devices and supernatural creatures in order to trigger a Nanobot Plague response. The reaction can be stopped if the rounds are removed fast enough, but this is usually an impossible task since the victim has less than a minute to remove all the metal fragments. A side effect of the odd shaped rounds is that they do reduce the range and accuracy of the gatling gun, although the incredibly high rate of fire of this weapon makes up for its poor accuracy by blanketing the target area with hundreds of rounds.

These weapons are designed to be used against the Resistance, but Legion finds them equally effective against the Machine. They are ideal against large concentrations of targets or fast moving opponents, plus it is easy for the Walker to manufacture ammunition for these weapons from scrap metal found all across the surface.

Primary Purpose: Defense.

Secondary Purpose: Anti-Missile.

Mega-Damage: 1D8x10 M.D. to everything within a 40 foot (12.2 m) area per burst of 200 rounds. Any living target struck by a burst of frag rounds will have 1D8 rounds lodged in its flesh. Unless the rounds are removed in 1D4 melee rounds, they will each trigger a Nanobot Plague response (there is no additional damage against robots). Digging out each round takes 1D6 melee attacks and inflicts an additional 2D6 M.D. Most Nanoplague effects occur instantaneously and actually burn out the Nanobots responsible for the damage. This means that a metallic fragment may harmlessly remain in the target for a while, but if it is not removed within 30 minutes, the metal shard will trigger another plague response as new Nanobots discover the fragment (and again every 30 minutes thereafter). Roll on the Nanoplague Response Table below to determine additional damage:

01-10% The metallic fragments twist and bend within the target, tearing it apart from the inside. Each round inflicts an additional 2D4 M.D. to the Bio-Tech device and no damage to the pilot inside (in the case of Living Armor or Host Armor).

11-20% Every frag round sprouts a half dozen sharp blades that shoot throughout the interior of the target. Each round inflicts an additional 2D6 M.D. to the Bio-Tech device plus there is a 01-40% chance that the blades will pierce the pilot inside (in the case of Living Armor or Host Armor) which inflicts 1D4 S.D.C. per round.

21-30% The fragments dissolve into metal shavings (dissolved on a molecular level), without harming the victim. The frag rounds are completely destroyed and there is no chance they will inflict any additional damage.

31-40% The rounds burst into flame or melt into a red hot liquid inside the target. Each round inflicts an additional 3D6 M.D. per melee round for 1D4 melees to the Bio-Tech device plus there is a 01-50% chance that the flames will burn the pilot inside (in the case of Living Armor or Host Armor) which inflicts 2D6 S.D.C. per melee round for 1D4 melees (this is the total damage no matter how many rounds pierce the target). The frag rounds are completely destroyed and there is no chance they will inflict any additional damage.

41-50% The rounds generate a lethal metallic poison (similar to mercury poisoning), roll to save; needs a roll of 14 or better to save. If the roll fails, the Bio-Tech device suffers an additional 3D6 M.D. and is horribly weakened for 1D4 hours. Speed and strength are reduced by half plus the victim loses 4 attacks per melee and is -6 to strike, parry, and dodge.

51-60% The frag rounds generate a powerful static charge that damages the target and stuns the pilot inside. Each round inflicts an additional 4D6 M.D. to the Bio-Tech device plus the pilot suffers 1D6+2 S.D.C. per round and is stunned for 1D4 melee rounds. While stunned, the pilot loses one attack per melee round and is -3 to strike, parry, and dodge.

61-70% The barbed fragments continuously twist and spin within the target, inflicting an additional 4D4 M.D. per melee round to the Bio-Tech device for 3D4 melees, but it does not inflict additional damage to the pilot. The rounds actually work their way out of the target after 3D4 melee rounds.

71-80% The frag rounds overload and explode within the target. Each round inflicts an additional 6D6 M.D. to the Bio-Tech device, plus there is a 01-65% chance that the pilot inside is also injured (in the case of Living Armor and Host Armor) which inflicts 2D6 S.D.C. per round. The frag rounds are completely destroyed and there is no chance they will inflict any additional damage.

81-90% The rounds create a powerful organic solvent that dissolves the target from the inside. Each round inflicts an additional 3D4 M.D. per melee round for 2D4 melees to the Bio-Tech device plus there is a 01-50% chance that the acid will burn the pilot inside (in the case of Living Armor or Host Armor) which inflicts a total of 2D4+2 S.D.C. per melee round for 2D4 melees (this is the total damage no matter how many rounds pierce the target).

91-00% The barbed fragments develop a limited intelligence and try to burrow through Host Armor or Living Armor to reach the pilot inside. As they tear through the Bio-Tech device, they inflict an additional 4D4 M.D. per melee round for 2D4 melees. Once they reach the pilot, each round detonates, which inflicts

3D6 S.D.C. per round. The frag rounds are completely destroyed and there is no chance they will inflict any additional damage.

Rate of Fire: Each burst counts as one attack per melee. These weapons only fire bursts since single rounds are so inaccurate.

Range: 1,000 feet (305 m).

Payload: 20,000 rounds per cannon (100 bursts). Empty cannons are reloaded from the cargo hold within 1D4 minutes.

Bonuses: +2 to strike.

3. Mini-Missile Launchers (8): Six mini-missile launchers are mounted on the back of the Walker and two are mounted on the underbelly. The primary purpose of the back mounted launchers is to intercept incoming missiles and combat fast-moving aerial attackers. These massive launchers can throw up a nearly impenetrable wall of mini-missiles to shield the Walker from even the heaviest bombardments. The belly-mounted launchers are primarily used to bombard ground forces that get too close. Legion prefers plasma missiles due to their impressive destructive power and decent blast radius, but any type of missile can be manufactured if the situation calls for it.

Primary Purpose: Defense.

Secondary Purpose: Anti-Missile/Anti-Aircraft.

Mega-Damage: 1D6x10 M.D. per plasma mini-missile.

Rate of Fire: Each launcher can fire volleys of 1, 2, 4, 8, 15, 25, or 50.

Range: About a mile (1.6 km).

Payload: 50 mini-missiles per launcher (400 total). Empty missile launchers are reloaded from the cargo hold within 2D4 minutes.

4. Point Defense Lasers (10): Lining the perimeter of the Walker are ten short-range laser turrets. They are primarily used against enemy infantry or anyone else that gets too close. These low-profile ball turrets are often difficult to detect, much less target (-3 to strike).

Primary Purpose: Defense.

Secondary Purpose: Anti-Personnel.

Mega-Damage: 5D6 M.D. per blast. Up to three turrets can engage the same target simultaneously (3D4x10+30 M.D.).

Rate of Fire: Each blast counts as one melee attack. A simultaneous attack from up to three turrets counts as one melee attack.

Range: 1,000 feet (305 m).

Payload: Effectively unlimited.

5. Gas Vents (4): The four gas jet nozzles mounted along the sides of the robot can cover a 300 foot (91 m) radius around the Walker with a thick cloud of toxic chemicals. Legion commonly uses knockout gas or paralyzing compounds in order to incapacitate humans and animals so that they can be collected for cybernetic conversion. However, she will switch to *Creeping Death* nerve gas when she needs to flush out hidden opponents.

Primary Purpose: Materials Collection.

Secondary Purpose: Defense.

Mega-Damage: Depends on the type of chemicals used. Knockout gas or paralysis gas does not inflict any damage. However, anyone exposed to either of these compounds must make a save vs non-lethal poison of 16 or higher or else be incapacitated for 4D4 minutes.

Anyone exposed to **Creeping Death** nerve gas must make a save vs lethal poison of 14 or higher or else suffer severe damage. On a failed roll, the victim suffers 2D6 S.D.C. and 3D6 points of damage directly to H.P. every melee round for 2D4 melees. The

target's body spasms uncontrollably and is wracked with mind-numbing pain. Attacks per melee are reduced to one, all combat bonuses are gone plus the victim suffers additional penalties of -10 to strike, parry, and dodge, and Spd. is reduced to 1D4 while the gas eats away at his or her flesh. If the poor soul is lucky enough to survive, he or she will be extremely weak (reduce P.E., P.S., and Spd. to 1D4) for 1D6 days. Furthermore, the victim only has two attacks per melee and suffers penalties of -5 to strike, parry, and dodge. On a successful save, damage is reduced by half, P.S., P.E., and Spd. are only reduced by 1D6, and the victim suffers penalties of -2 to strike, parry, and dodge for 4D4 minutes.

This brutal nerve gas is also strong enough to harm Mega-Damage beings, but the damage is not nearly as severe. Bio-Tech devices and Mega-Damage beings must also make a save vs lethal poison of 14 or higher. On a failed roll, the target suffers 3D6 M.D. per melee round for 1D6 melees. Bio-Tech creations like Host Armor, War Mounts, and Gorehounds will also experience intense pain and muscle spasms. These victims lose 4 attacks per melee round and are -6 to strike, parry, and dodge for 1D4 minutes. On a successful save, the target only suffers 1D4 M.D. per melee round for 1D6 melees and all penalties are reduced by half. Rate of Fire: All four jets fire in conjunction (counts as one melee attack).

Range: 300 foot (91 m) radius around the Walker.

Payload: Chemical compounds are manufactured as needed. It takes 2D4+4 minutes to manufacture enough toxin for one blast.

6. Collection Tentacles (8): The mouth of the Walker is surrounded by eight retractable tentacles that are used to snatch up raw materials for processing. When not in use, the tentacles retract completely into the body of the Walker, but they can extend up to a length of 100 feet (30.5 m). Each one is tipped with a powerful, three-fingered claw that is strong enough to crush a block of mega-steel, but precise enough to pick a single flower without harming a petal. This allows the Walker to collect any raw materials it may need without inflicting unnecessary damage. Since Legion's definition of "raw materials" includes fully armed Splicers and robotic war machines, these tentacles are also equipped with the means to incapacitate their prey without inflicting too much residual damage. Each one can deliver a powerful electric shock that can stun living prey or scramble the circuits of robotic targets. The voltage and amperage are specially calibrated to inflict minimal damage while maximizing the disruptive effects on the target's circuitry or nervous system. Live targets generally just require a brief shock, but a continuous charge is needed to keep robots incapacitated. The tentacles can also extrude an incredibly strong carbon nanotube webbing that can be used to cocoon particularly worrisome targets.

Primary Purpose: Raw Material Collection.

Secondary Purpose: Defense.

Mega-Damage: The electric shock inflicts 1D6 M.D. every melee round that it is applied. As long as the current is running through a robotic target, its circuits will be completely scrambled and it will be unable to move or defend itself in any way. The charge is only strong enough to affect robots weighing 600 pounds (270 kg) or less, but multiple tentacles can combine their attacks to affect larger targets. When used against living targets, Legion generally just uses brief jolts of electricity to prevent permanent injury. Victims must make a roll to save vs. stun of 15 or higher. On a failed roll, the target is completely paralyzed for one melee

round, plus stunned for the next 2D4 melee rounds after that (-3 attacks per melee; -4 to strike, parry, and dodge; and speed is reduced by 40%).

Once the target is stunned, the Walker may also opt to cocoon the victim in carbon nanotube webbing. One melee action is required to apply one 20 foot (6.1 m) length of webbing. The cocoon itself has 50 M.D.C., but victims with a Robotic P.S. of 35 or higher can spend one melee round to break free of their bonds. The Walker can continue to apply webbing to reinforce the cocoon. Every additional 20 feet (6.1 m) of webbing increases the M.D.C. of the cocoon by 30 M.D.C. and increases the P.S. required to break free by 20.

Rate of Fire: Activating the electric shock counts as one melee attack (it does not require any melee attacks to maintain the shock, but that tentacle cannot be used for anything else).

Range: The tentacles have a reach of 100 feet (30.5 m), and the nanotube webbing can be applied up to 10 feet (3 m) away.

Payload: The payload for the electrical blasts is effectively unlimited. Each tentacle holds 60 feet (18.3 m) of webbing (360 feet/110 m total). Additional webbing can be loaded from the cargo hold in 1D4+2 minutes.

7. Surgical Lasers (4): Four surgical lasers are mounted around the perimeter of the Walker's mouth. These are used to quickly "lobotomize" the neural network of any captured N.E.X.U.S. robot so that it can be brought inside the Processing Bay. Legion contains the complete schematics to all N.E.X.U.S. robots, so she knows exactly how to disable the robot's artificial intelligence and links to the Machine without inflicting any damage to the main body.

Primary Purpose: Incapacitating Machines.

Secondary Purpose: Defense.

Mega-Damage: 2D6 M.D. per blast.

Rate of Fire: Each blast counts as one melee attack.

Range: 30 feet (9 m).

Payload: Effectively unlimited.

8. Hand to Hand Combat: Rather than use long-range weapons, the Walker can engage in hand to hand combat using its tentacles, legs, and weapon arms.

Mega-Damage:

Restrained Tentacle Strike: 2D6 M.D.

Tentacle Strike: 5D6 M.D.

Power Tentacle Strike: 1D6x10+10 M.D., but counts as two attacks.

Crush Attack using Tentacles: 6D6 M.D., must first entangle the target.

Tear Attack using Tentacles: 5D6 M.D.

Power Tear Attack using Multiple Tentacles: 2D4x10+10 M.D., but counts as three attacks.

Punch with Weapon Arms: 1D4x10 M.D.

Power Punch with Weapon Arms: 2D4x10 M.D., but counts as two attacks.

Stomp: 4D4X10 M.D., but smaller opponents under 10 feet (3 m) in height are difficult targets to hit (-2 to strike).

Body Block/Ram: 3D6x10 M.D., but counts as two attacks. Can only be performed against targets that are at least 40 feet tall (12.2 m). This attack is mainly used against fortifications.

Ram Attack: 2D6x10 M.D. to targets 50 feet (15.2 m) or taller, 4D4x10 M.D. to targets less than 50 feet (15.2 m) from a ramming strike. 01-75% likelihood of knocking an opponent

who is 50-100 feet (15.2 to 30.5 m) tall off his feet and the victim loses initiative and two melee attacks.

Any opponent under 50 feet (15.2 m) is knocked off his feet, but in this case roll to determine the resulting penalty:

01-33% Sent flying 3D10 yards/meters and loses initiative and three melee attacks, plus is dazed for 1D4 melee rounds, during which the victim's attacks per round are reduced by half.

34-66% Knocked down and loses initiative and three melee attacks and takes an extra 2D10 M.D.

67-00% The character is knocked down and run-over by the treads, suffering an additional 2D6x10+20 M.D.!

Getting Run-Over: Characters, vehicles and objects under 15 feet (4.6 m) tall who can't get out of the way of the Factory Walker are automatically trampled and take 2D8x10+20 M.D.! If they survive, they lose initiative and 1D4+2 melee attacks/actions. **Note:** The Factory Walker can trample over such small obstructions without stopping or losing speed, so it can plow right through lines or clusters of troops and keep firing with its guns without stopping or using a single action.

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Khemennu

– City of the Eighteen Cosmic Gods

Optional Material for the Palladium Fantasy RPG®

By Ian Herbert

Rystrom Khejas stared down at the heaving mass of people on the plain below him. Thousands upon thousands of them, slowly pushing their way through the endless sea of tents to the sprawling city beyond. Even from here a cacophony of voices could be heard; it must be deafening in the crowd below. Never before had the scholar seen so many people in one place. Could there even be so many people in the world? It appeared as if every being in existence had descended on the one city on this day. Rystrom shielded his eyes from the burning sun as he raised his gaze to the city beyond. A diverse mix of towers, domes and spires peppered the rooftops. A tiny figure caught his eye, launching itself from one of the towers; even at this great distance Rystrom could make out the huge, leathery wings and snaking tail.

“Gargoyle!” Rystrom’s hand instinctively reached for his sword, though the creature was miles away.

“Stay your hand, Rystrom,” spoke his companion. “There’s no danger here. It looks like someone must have upset the Priests of Set, that’s all. Likely this won’t be the last time you see a demon here in Khemennu. They’re just pawns of the priesthood, servants of the gods, like the rest of us. Why, I could summon one up myself right now if I wanted to.”

“So... you are a Priest of Darkness, then?”

“What of it? Just because I serve a god of Taut doesn’t make me some sort of evil megalomaniac. Light and Dark are just two sides of the same coin; one cannot be without the other, fire and water, and so on – you’re a scholar, Rystrom, you know the routine. If Anubis hadn’t decided he wasn’t yet ready for your soul, we never would have made it out of the Nimro Kingdom alive.”

“Yes... of course. Just seeing it so blatant, so out in the open like this, it’s not what I’m used to.”

“Khemennu is the most cosmopolitan of cities. All types of people mix together here. Almost everyone is accepted to some degree – provided, of course, they worship the gods of Light and Dark.”

Rystrom looked down again at the multitude slowly making its way into the city “And so many of them...”

“Yes,” mused the preacher. “Only the gods know why they chose to schedule the Festival of the Two Suns at the height of summer. The city will smell worse than a Credia slave market, damn them!”

“Such blasphemy! From a priest!”

“Oh, the gods won’t be listening to me. All those holy men ahead of us, every one of them praying for the gods to raise their salaries, grant them a juicy promotion, or make their wives prettier. No god will hear little old me amongst all that garbage.”

“But you are one of them, too.”

“I’m not technically a priest, Rystrom. I’m a prophet. There’s a difference. Come on, I’ll show you. Let’s get down there and rattle a few cages!”

The self-proclaimed prophet grinned and strode purposefully forward to join the line of pilgrims. Rystrom gazed once more at the impossible sight ahead, gathered his thoughts and his belongings, and hurried after him.

Khemennu, also known as the “City of the Eighteen Cosmic Gods,” is a stronghold of the Church of Light and Dark, where the faithful number over two million.

Khemennu is a place of contradictions: A seemingly impossible city, larger than almost any other in the world, yet hidden away in the otherwise wild and barbaric Old Kingdom. An oasis for humankind, but surrounded on all sides by enemies. A place where great wealth and great poverty exist side by side. It owes its existence to one thing – faith. It is the will of the gods that has allowed the city to endure, and, according to myth, their direct action that protects it.

A Brief History of the Founding of the City

During the Elf-Dwarf War, many terrible battles were fought; thousands of Elves, Dwarves and others lost their lives in senseless slaughter. All over the New Kingdom were mass graves and shrines to commemorate battle sites and fallen comrades. After the conclusion of the Elf-Dwarf War and the Millennium of Purification, around 7,000 years ago, the Elven and Dwarven nations had all but collapsed, and refugees wandered what was left of their world, fleeing from the Orc and Goblin hordes that had invaded their lands. One such group had turned to religion for guidance, and by the mercy of their gods were led to a settlement near the western tip of the mountains. What they found was a huge cemetery, so large as to be a veritable City of the Dead, or *Necropolis* – the site of one of the mass graves from the war. It was presided over by a community of priests – followers of the death god Anubis – faithfully tending the bodies and souls of the dead. Elves and Dwarves were buried there and the priesthood was made up of both, racial prejudices overcome in favor of holy duty. The Necropolis had survived untouched by the invading hordes, shunned by the superstitious monster races, who feared the wrath of the gods. Believing their meeting to be a sign from the gods and united by their shared faith, the refugees settled alongside the Necropolis and soon a modest town had sprung up.

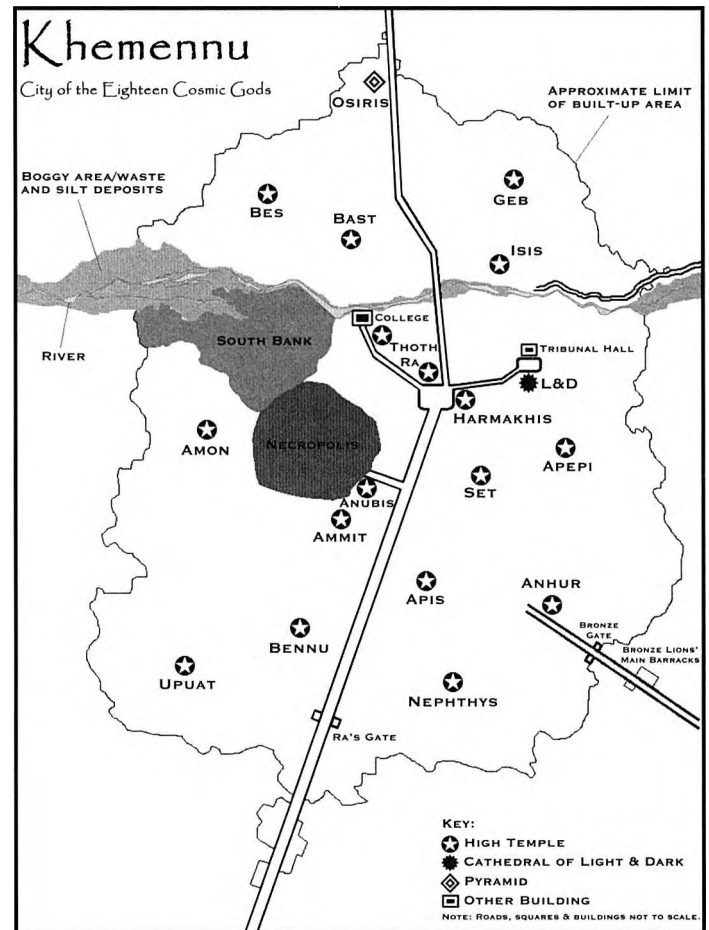
Rumors of a safe haven for both Elven and Dwarven members of the Church of Light and Dark grew, and so did the town, blossoming into a small city, whose inhabitants had named *Khemennu*. As is often the case, their success gained the attention of a lo-

cal warlord, who gathered his armies to take the city for himself. A battle raged, and despite the magical powers of the clergy (both Light and Dark), the city and Necropolis seemed lost. Then one young priest called upon his god for a miracle to save them – by the power of Harmakhis, the Great Sphinx, a *second sun* rose from the land, soaring into the sky to hover majestically above the city. The voice of the god echoed over the battlefield, warning the invaders that Khemennu was under the protection of the Gods of Ma'ip, and that none shall succeed in its conquest. The attackers fled in terror, never to be seen again (note that the myths never specifically tell who or what the invaders were; they are referred to only as 'the Horde' or 'the Warlord.' Over the centuries they have been associated with whatever race or people has suited the cultural bias of the time, and have been variously identified as Orcs, Giants, Dwarves, Kobolds, Gromek, demons, The Purifiers, rival religious organizations and even early human kingdoms). At the end of the battle, the second sun descended gently to the ground to rest on the outskirts of the city, its holy light fading to reveal a huge circle of stone, now known as the Sun Disc. The people turned to the young priest, named Ilker Karaban, for guidance in rebuilding the city after the attack. Wise in the ways of both religion and science, Karaban realized that the location of the Sun Disc in relation to the Chapel of the Necropolis matched directly with the corresponding positions of the constellations of Anubis and Harmakhis in the night sky. Inspired, he ordered the building of eighteen temples, dedicated to each of the gods that had aided them in the battle and on their initial journey to this place; each one to be placed in relation to their position in the *cosmos* – on earth as they are in the heavens: Temples to the Eighteen Cosmic Gods. At first, most of the temples were outside the city limits, and separate settlements grew around each one, with their own residences, industry and commercial centers. But over time, protected by the fear of the gods' wrath, Khemennu grew exponentially, and the settlements merged into one another, forming an enormous metropolis. And so the *City of the Eighteen Cosmic Gods* was born.

At least, that's how the history books tell it. Fact and fiction both factor in any story of this kind. The subsequent history of Khemennu has not been without its struggles. The fortunes of the city have risen and fallen over the centuries, at times looking like it may collapse completely under the weight of its own population, disease, famine or invaders. But it has always sprung back to life, benefitting from its culture of openness to all peoples – provided they are willing to swear faithfulness to the Gods of Light and Dark. The city was forced to evolve; at first besieged by the inhabitants of what was by now the Old Kingdom, and then working alongside them. One particular leader, Uzlas Tirici, now known as the first 'Mediator' of the city, helped to forge a lasting peace with the surrounding tribes. Whenever there was a link through faith, connections could be made. The greatest of these was between the early Dwarven citizens of Khemennu and their traditional Kobold allies in the mountains nearby. Once a simple trade relationship, soon Kobolds were moving into the city in droves. But, in time, this influx was to be dwarfed by new immigrants – humans from the West. During each major historical migration of humans, many hopefuls sought out this fabled holy city in the wilderness. Determined, ambitious and quick to breed (when compared to long-lived races such as Elves, Dwarves and Kobolds), humans eventually became the majority population, dominating in all areas of society. Conversely, new Elven and

Dwarven immigration fell dramatically over the centuries, the crowded and chaotic city unappealing to their refined tastes. Now the two founding races of Khemennu are but a mere fraction of its population.

The citizens have been forced to defend their city on countless occasions, but with a host of priests, holy crusaders and summoned minions at their disposal, they have managed to rout many a would-be conqueror. In some cases, invading tribes have succeeded in taking over the city only to find themselves and their descendants effectively assimilated into its society, ultimately taking on the traditions and beliefs of the people they believed they had conquered.



Overview

Today, the City of the Eighteen Cosmic Gods is an anomaly. One would hesitate to call it a jewel in the wilderness of the Old Kingdom, for anyone who has visited Khemennu could scarcely describe it as such. It is a sprawling, overcrowded, filthy dump. It was historically built around the centers of the eighteen High Temples to the gods, but centuries of building, razing, fires, wars, rebuilding and reworking have created a jumbled mess of a city, without structure. It is a city of contrasts, with rich and poor, humans, Kobolds and other peoples living on top of one another. The city works only because of their united faith, something the ruling clergy are sure to maintain. Khemennu is a theocracy; the clergy *are* the law, the masters of the city in all matters, and for the vast majority of the populace, this is exactly how they want it. Only through guidance from the gods can their rulers truly govern with wisdom and fairness. Though what is wise and what

is fair may appear to be quite different things to different people. Yet, the people have faith in the system of Light and Dark in all matters, both religious and secular. Good and bad are a part of life and this must be recognized. This is how the people of Khemennu are able to explain away apparently opposing principles and accept such a divergent mix of people and attitudes. See the 'Population,' 'Politics' and 'Orientation' sections below for details.

Economy

Keeping such a large city running and solvent is no easy task, especially considering its isolation and hostile surroundings. Khemennu is a bustling and productive city, similar in that respect to many of those in the Western Empire or Timiro, with thousands of workshops, craftspeople and artisans churning out their wares by the millions. Within the city itself, there is a roaring trade. The difficulty comes in importing raw materials, and in producing goods that appeal to the surrounding communities.

What Khemennu can offer to the nomadic tribes of the Old Kingdom is an opportunity to purchase items that cannot be easily manufactured on the move; anything that requires kilns or forges being an obvious one. The draw of the city is that, while many of these items can be found in small quantities in minor settlements elsewhere, Khemennu's size enables the largest tribes to purchase metalwork, leather goods, pottery, preserved foods, etc. in much larger quantities, saving on cost and allowing them to equip an army (sometimes literally) of people. In exchange, from these tribes come the huge herds of livestock and grains needed to feed Khemennu's urban population. However, without something more worthwhile to trade, the city would doubtless have perished centuries ago.

Essentially, 'religious tourism' is the backbone of the economy. One of Khemennu's main sources of income comes from donations to the Church from visiting pilgrims. Throughout the year (not just at festival time), determined believers make the treacherous journey to the holy city to pay their respects to whichever god they prefer. Many of them bring with them goods and materials not readily available nearby. Most of the merchant caravans that arrive from the 'civilized' world would not have bothered to attempt such a journey were profit the only target – such expeditions are often initiated by members of the clergy intent on a voyage to Khemennu and looking for safety in numbers and a return on their investment to boot. Visitors to Khemennu need places to sleep, eat and drink, and the citizens supply these in great numbers. Many of the locals rent out rooms to pilgrims during festival time, at extortionate prices. Buildings that for the rest of the year may be homes, workshops, warehouses or barns are temporarily refitted to serve as boarding houses for a few weeks each year. The streets of the city – crowded at the best of times – see the numbers of food stalls and carts double. Most of the pilgrims gladly fritter their money away on souvenirs, trinkets, carvings, prayer books, holy water and (fake) holy 'relics.' And all donate a good portion of their cash to one of the churches or temples. If there is a standard currency in Khemennu it is the Western Empire *Imperial*, though many denominations can be found. There is a relatively large amount of ancient Old Kingdom coinage in circulation; enterprising foreign bankers sometimes make the journey to the holy city solely to exchange their money for the rarer and more valuable Old Kingdom currency. On their return journey, the merchants carry with them local goods, jewelry, rugs,

ornaments (most with a religious motif), and even exotic animals such as camels, lions or Silonar. The trade in fineries goes both ways; Khemennu traders deal extensively in perfumes from the Western Empire for the rich and the clergy, keen to shield themselves from the stench of the city.

Despite this regular flow of cash, feeding the city's immense population is still a core matter of concern for its leaders. The many specialist 'Healing Priests' present in Khemennu (see **Mysteries of Magic: Book One**, page 41), most of them members of the Sect of Apis, play an important role in sustaining the provisions required. Low level priests, generally those acting as subordinates to a temple's head priest, are employed as part of their roles to 'Create Bread and Milk' as per the spell (**PFRPG** main book, page 198). An average third or fourth level priest (they do not gain this ability until third level, and higher level priests are rarely employed in this role full time) can cast the spell two or three times a day. Three hours mediation will enable them to case the spell twice more, with the typical priest able to produce an average of 35 loaves of bread and five gallons (19 liters) of milk a day, more if need be. These are kept for distribution amongst the church members and staff themselves (often as part of their pay), donated to charity, or sold directly to the general public for a reasonable price (slightly cheaper than regular bread and milk, but not so low as to put genuine bakers and dairy farmers out of business). In addition to this, there is a decree within the Sect of Apis that Healing Priests of all ranks are expected to make their way to one of the goddess' hospitals or poorhouses once each day and cast the spell, donating its bounty to the poor and/or sick.

Law and Justice

The Sect of Ra has traditionally incorporated a large armed force, known as the Jade Hawks due to the green uniforms and distinctive hawk-shaped helmets they wear. On occasion in the past, the armies of the Sect of Ra and the Sect of Anhur have clashed, when one side or the other have attempted to impose their authority, or when one army has supported a coup. To ease the tensions between them, the two forces have settled into two distinct roles: the Jade Hawks are organized into the nearest thing the city has to a police force, a sort of city watch, known as the Light Watch, responsible for dispensing justice to wrongdoers. By contrast, the soldiers of Anhur, the Bronze Lions, are responsible for the defense of the city and its surrounding dependents and missions. There is some overlapping of roles, and both forces are very proud and defensive of their positions, eager to show they are better than the other, but for the most part they work well in their respective roles. Like their patron god, the Light Watchmen are passionate about dispensing justice and maintaining order. But for the most part, they don't go looking for trouble – there are many sections of the city where the watchmen just don't bother patrolling, allowing the 'less-deserving' inhabitants of the city to wallow in lawlessness in those places where it appears to be an impossible task to enforce the law. As one can imagine, a city the size and state of Khemennu has many shady areas, and the haphazard layout allows criminals to escape and hide more often than not. If a crime is committed in sight of a Light Watch patrol, they will be quick to act and tend to be heavy-handed in the execution of their duties. It is believed that this is the only lesson that the non-human elements of the city will understand. However, despite their methods, it is the threat

of the Light-Watchmen that keeps most of the streets safe for the general public.

Investigations of crimes are brief and administration of justice quick and brutal. If a crime warrants a trial of any kind, this is usually administered by the local priest of Light and Dark or a priest of Ra. They will hear the evidence from both sides and make their decision alone, in a similar manner to the Tribunal that rules the city. More significant crimes, or those where important citizens are involved, will warrant a hearing presided over by a Bishop or High Priest. Two ordinary priests will be selected as Advocates to represent the accused and the victim/accuser.

With such a huge population, already struggling for basic needs such as food and water, a large, expensive prison system is untenable. Punishments are often corporal in nature: flogging, beating, stoning or maiming (cutting off a hand, finger, nose, ear, etc.) for most crimes. The death penalty is in force for murder, rape, witchcraft and heresy (specifically against the Church of Light and Dark or any of its branches), but when such crimes are committed against the lowlier peoples of the city, they are often overlooked or never reach a Tribunal. The perpetrator (or suspected perpetrator) may simply be beaten or even killed in a dark alley somewhere by the authorities as a lesson to the other lowlifes in the area. Crimes committed against the Church or its envoys will always receive much harsher punishments than those against the general populace, and will be aired in public as an example to others. Expulsion from the city is a common sentence for minor crimes; the authorities simply don't want troublemakers in the city and will eject them forcibly. However, with such a huge population, and an influx of visitors each year during the annual pilgrimage, it is child's play for an exiled criminal to sneak back into the city, provided he keeps a low profile once inside. There are a few dungeons dotted around the city, often beneath some of the larger churches and temples (especially those to Ra and Set), where prisoners are kept. These are often criminals who are (or were) too important, well-connected or high-class for the usual punishments or have escaped the death penalty through intervention by a powerful ally. But in these dark, forgotten tunnels – many of them converted tombs – incarceration may be a fate worse than death. Sometimes, at night, the faint moans of the imprisoned can be heard near the High Temple of Set.

The standard issue for the Light Watchmen is a small shield, a cudgel for subduing minor offenders and a scimitar for dispensing more permanent justice. Many also have personal weapons, the mace being a common favorite. Those on guard duty at gates or on walls are likely to be armed with spears or bows in similar fashion to their rival Bronze Lions. Constables are clad in hard or studded leather armor as standard; officers have a variety of armors, most often scale.

Military Forces

The Sect of Anhur is responsible for fielding Khemennu's standing army, known as the Bronze Lions due to the stylized lion-head designs on their breastplates, shields and helmets. The basic infantry armament of the Bronze Lions harks back to the days of the Elven Empire before the Elf-Dwarf War, when the Elves' more primitive metallurgy meant that bronze was their metal of choice and the Elven soldiers were armed mostly with long spears and large shields of wood and metal plate. Spear and shield have remained the standard weapons of war for Khemen-

nu, the soldiers forming a strong phalanx of overlapping shields – a more than adequate defense against the largely undisciplined marauders of the Old Kingdom. They also have a backup weapon should the spear be broken or thrown, usually a short sword, light axe (2D6 damage) or a traditional *Khopesh* or 'sickle-sword' (2D6 damage and can be used to entangle an opponent's weapon or shield – see the illustration of Anubis or the Tauton in **Dragons & Gods™**, pages 154 & 155). Short bows are an important weapon in the Lions' arsenal, with basic archery training standard for most soldiers. However, specialized Long Bowmen are few and far between – the possible addition of the longbow could be an important step forward for the Khemennu army. Standard armor is usually a half suit of scale mail to allow freedom of movement and lessen the effects of the heat in summer. Officers will have a half suit of plate, the breastplate decorated with the intricate lion's head design. Most of the official soldiers are human, with some Elves, Dwarves, and Kobolds. There is also a large Orc contingent to the army, known as the 'Anhur Regulars,' who are armed with spear and shield like their human counterparts. However, to save on costs, the shields are made of wood and they are given only hard leather armor. Other non-humans such as Ogres, Giants, or Eandroth are generally used as 'irregulars' and armed with the basic spear and shield, in various sizes. Armor is less common, depending on size and availability. Many of these irregulars will own personal weapons in addition to the standard issue.

What the Khemennu defense force lacks is a significant cavalry contingent. What cavalry they do have are few in number but well trained and capable. Enough to break the ranks of cowardly Goblins and Orcs, but they have not seen battle against well organized armies of the human nations or the forces of the Nimro Kingdom. As well as horsemen, there are units of camel-mounted troops, war chariots and even a few Eandroth warriors mounted on Silonar (unsuited to regimental warfare, the stupid and aggressive animals are mostly employed as skirmishers). Gryphons are used sparingly, for fear of losing too many of these sacred animals, and are generally employed as attack animals as opposed to mounts, swooping over the enemy as a scare tactic, although they may occasionally be ridden for scouting, to relay messages, or to fly over a battlefield for an aerial view. As mentioned elsewhere, although they rarely need to be deployed, the mere threat of demons or Tautons on the battlefield often tips things in Khemennu's favor.

The Sun Disc

The Horde readied for its final offensive – a mass of warriors hungry for victory, voices raised in cries of glory, but lost in a clamor of rattling mail, clanging swords, the banging of shields and the unrelenting pounding of a thousand footsteps. The last remaining defenders of Khemennu huddled together in the shadow of the Necropolis wall, determined that the heretics would never gain access to the sacred burial grounds. However, the survivors knew that there was little hope of victory, gaining comfort only in the fact that their impending sacrifice would be for the best of causes. Each made peace with Anubis, Nephthys, Upuat – whichever god they thought most fitting. If they could not have victory, at least by Anhur's will they would send a host of souls before them. The Beast would dine well on the unworthy tonight.

But not all the faithful sought solace in death; in the inevitable futility of being embraced by the Dark Gods. One spoke – quietly, so only his god could hear – “Oh, Lord of Mercy, see this place where the chosen of the gods do dwell, see this place where the faithful have lain interred for centuries. See this place, a gateway to the afterlife, final home to a thousand blessed souls. See its imminent destruction at the hands of the Pagan Horde and weep. I beseech thee, Great Sphinx, Master of the Rising Sun, Symbol of Hope, Winged Champion of Justice – take pity on your people in their hour of need, deliver us from this wretched Horde.”

And on this day the Eye of Harmakhis did look upon the chosen, and the god did see fit to answer the young disciple’s prayer with a Miracle. Though the sun already stood high in the sky, a brilliant halo of light came to illuminate the once gloomy horizon in the east. Its divine radiance vanquishing the very clouds, a Second Sun rose as if on the wings of a god, racing to meet its brother in the heavens, finally ceasing at its summit, directly over the Holy City, bathing all beneath in an aura of Holy Light.

The Horde cowered from the Miracle displayed above; creatures of Darkness unmasked by the Holy Light of the Two Suns. The Terrible Warlord himself hesitated, the fabled Spear of Qumaaz wavered uncertainly in the air, a sign to all his army that their general had faltered. The Horde, once feared throughout the Old Kingdom, fell to fear themselves. As one, they turned and fled as rats from a burning barn, tumbling over one another, crushing their brethren underfoot in their haste. Some tore the very eyes from their sockets, fearing to look upon the Second Sun, though still they could feel its blessed warmth on their faces, burning unseen like the condemning gaze of the gods; a judgment from which none can hide. Others took their own lives rather than face their wrath. When the tide had finally receded, the fields were littered with their dead and dying, victims of their own cowardice.

The blessed ones rose from the shadows to stand tall in the Light. For a full day the Second Sun stood as a sentinel above Khemennu, keeping all who would harm her at bay. When the Sun’s time had passed, it descended to the earth, to land softly in the fields, its light dazzling all who gazed upon it. Slowly, the Holy Light dwindled, leaving nought but a huge circle of faultless stone, towering over the land like a coin on its edge. The Sun Disc would remain as a symbol of victory and justice, when followers of the Gods of Light and the Gods of Taut stood and fought side by side. None would dare strike the Holy City of Khemennu again, fearful in the knowledge that it was under the protection of the gods.”

*- From the Writings of Archbishop Tirici,
First Mediator of Khemennu.*

Of course, at least a little of Archbishop Tirici’s account is artistic license. Despite his hopes, Khemennu has fallen under attack many times in its history. But the presence of the Sun Disc has definitely given more than a few would-be conquerors pause for thought, and brought wealth and fame to the city. The Disc itself is housed in the *Sun Temple* – really a complex of temple buildings that also includes the High Temple of Harmakhis. The Disc is in the center of a large, open courtyard surrounded on all sides by a high, three-storey gallery or cloister and on the north side by the Sun Temple itself. Gates are located on the east and west walls. The western gate opens out onto the Sun Square – the largest and most important plaza in the city – on which the High Temple of Ra can also be found. The Disc is approximately 30

feet (9.1 m) in diameter and 8 feet (2.4 m) thick, but is partially submerged, protruding only 25 feet (7.6 m) out of the ground. It is framed on each side by a pair of golden, crescent-shaped structures, echoing the style of the Sun Disc emblem worn by the Pontiff of Light and Dark himself. To protect it from the elements, the Disc is usually swathed in a white cloth, trimmed with elaborate gold thread designs, and is uncovered only during the annual Festival of the Two Suns. Note that the disc itself appears to be made of normal sandstone, and does not register as magic in any way.



The Pilgrimage

Without a doubt, it is the presence of the Sun Disc, and the annual pilgrimage that so many undertake, that keeps the city rolling. Without this annual influx of people, goods and cash, Khemennu would probably have bankrupted itself and imploded centuries ago. At the height of summer, when the sun is at its highest in the sky, thousands upon thousands of pilgrims make the arduous journey to the sacred Sun Disc.

To most of the world, Khemennu is a semi-mythological city; a half-believed story of a holy place in the wilderness. Many people will never travel further than twenty miles or so from their home town their entire lives, many far less than that. Only the truly adventurous, desperate or devout would consider such a journey, let alone travel across such dangerous territory. Still there seems to be an endless supply of those daring enough to take the risk. While disciples of the Church of Light and Dark may choose to make the dangerous pilgrimage at any time of year, the vast majority coincide with Khemennu’s biggest holy festival, the Festival of the Two Suns, held in midsummer in

celebration of the miracle of their founding. At this time, thousands of pilgrims descend upon the city, almost doubling its population. A great many of the local nomadic tribes and traders from all around also come to the city at this time, to take advantage of the thousands of potential customers. It is only at the time of the Festival of the Two Suns that Khemennu's faithful can *truly* be said to number over two million. The flat plain around the city becomes a sea of tents, a chaotic mass of pilgrims, hawkers and animals, the noise deafening and the smells overpowering. The festival technically lasts a full week, but visitors begin to arrive weeks before and some stay for weeks after, so the whole of summer sees a massive increase in population and trade. Those here to attend the festival have one task in mind: they must go to the Sun Temple in the morning, and pass by the Sun Disc on its northern side from west to east (heading towards the location of the rising sun), while reciting prayers to Harmakhis. In the afternoon, the devotees must repeat the process in reverse, passing by the southern face from east to west, representing the passing of the sun across the sky and into night. This must be achieved in the hours of daylight. In reality, at festival season the time of day is essentially ignored, the gods apparently giving the pilgrims dispensation based on the difficulty of completing their task through such congestion. It is now deemed acceptable to simply pass by the north side and then immediately return by the south side, thereby completing the process. Due to the sheer difficulty of getting through the city to the Sun Temple and returning, most pilgrims will take part in this ritual only once, but some return to the temple each day. Those with the right connections (or enough cash) are permitted entrance to the temple complex, and allowed to carry out the ceremony in the relative comfort and safety of the second gallery of the temple courtyard. However, even here it is crowded, stifling and unconformable. Only the clergy are allowed to use the uppermost gallery. An impressive balcony overlooks the courtyard from the Sun Temple, from which the High Priests and Bishops may observe the procession. The last day of the festival, the Day of Two Suns, on the supposed anniversary of the miracle, is the most popular and therefore most congested day of the festival, which officially ends at sunset on the last day. As the sun begins to set, anxious pilgrims yet to complete the ritual hurry forward to pay their respects while there is still time. In fact, hours of darkness will have passed by the time the flow of pilgrims eventually comes to an end.

Throughout the week, smaller events, fêtes and celebrations are held; 'Double Sun' motifs made of wood, paper maché or woven straw are paraded through the streets at dawn and raised in squares all across the city. **Note:** It is considered awfully bad form to conduct any 'deeds of great evil' on the Day of Two Suns (although what exactly constitutes 'great evil' is open to interpretation – pickpockets are a ubiquitous presence among the crowds), a tradition most of the Priests of Darkness uphold, both to avoid retribution from Harmakhis, and secretly because, even for them, it is good to have a 'day off' from plotting and backstabbing. Priests of both Light and Dark are known to come together in judgement against those who choose to ignore the edict (such as Witches or heathen criminals) to commit such acts on a festival day.

Population

The square was just as congested as every other street he had found. Rystrom pressed through the mob, finally finding a small oasis of freedom in the lee of a church wall. He paused to survey the crowd. All manner of creatures could be seen before him; most he knew, some he did not. The scholar noted with interest that everyone he saw here were near equals – in most cities of the world, he had seen Orcs in chains; in Mount Nimro, it was humans. But here both were living, working and shopping side by side, though Rystrom had seen enough to realize the relationship was by no means equal. Up ahead, an Ogre was attempting to pull some great animal through the crowd, loaded with goods. Two Goblins were fighting in the street over some insult, it seemed. A Kobold passed nearby – one of many – his eyes shielded from the sunlight by a veil hanging from the rim of his conical hat. Still, Rystrom was by now a seasoned traveler, and he had seen and met all sorts of peoples. It would take more than this to shock him.

He felt momentary relief as a great shadow blocked out the unrelenting sun. Then his stomach tightened and the hairs on the back of his neck prickled as he realized its cause – a Giant! Rystrom had seen a couple of Cyclops in the crowds, but had so far kept his distance. What if the Kingdom of Giants had not given up on their quarry so easily? What if their agents had followed him here? He readied his tongue for his best Giantese and turned slowly around.

His voice failed him as he looked up at the caster of the shadow. It was as big as a Giant, sure, but like none he'd ever seen. Its head was that of a lion, complete with a glorious, golden mane, and it was clad in magnificent golden armor. What manner of creature was this? Rystrom searched his brain. A Kinnie-Ger? Or one of the fabled cat-men of the southern jungles? No, that wasn't right. Wait – no, it couldn't possibly...

The majestic creature spoke to him in a voice that was somehow both soft and booming. "Rystrom Khejas. Your presence is requested at the Hall of Judgement."

Khemennu has a permanent resident population of around one million people of many diverse races. During the pilgrimage, its numbers swell to over two million, temporarily making it the most populous city in the world, surpassing even Caer Itom.

Population: 1,100,000

Humans: 484,000 (44%)

Orcs: 231,000 (21%)

Kobolds: 132,000 (12%)

Goblins/Hobgoblins: 115,500 (10.5%)

Ogres: 22,000 (2%)

Elves: 22,000 (2%)

Dwarves: 16,500 (1.5%)

Other (Giants, Trolls, Eandroth, Quorians, Gosai, demons, etc.): 77,000 (7%)

The population almost doubles during the Pilgrimage. These pilgrims are mostly made up of humans, Elves, Dwarves, Eandroth, tribal Ogres and Orcs and other 'monster races' from the surrounding areas. Some arrive at the city specifically on pilgrimage, some are there to take advantage of the event itself; the surge

in population creates a huge need for extra resources, which merchants (and con-men) from far and wide are happy to exploit.

Humans: (44%) The humans of Khemennu appear to be a mix of mostly Western heritage and what may have been termed 'local tribes,' but also include a number of immigrants from the south (including ethnic races from the Yin-Sloth Jungles) and elsewhere. Except for a few small South-Winders enclaves – relatively recent additions to the city – the various human races have been living together for centuries and many are mixed through interbreeding, resulting in a diverse population. Very little racial prejudice occurs between the humans; they consider themselves united under the common banner of the Church. By far the most common race, humans are clearly the dominant force in the city; the priests, authorities and bureaucrats of the city are overwhelmingly (but not exclusively) human.

Orcs: (21%) As in countless places elsewhere, Orcs form the backbone of the labor force of the city, typically accepted and welcomed by the humans, but plainly regarded and treated as an inferior race. The vast majority of the Orcs, while often exploited and with little chance of improving their lot, are not enslaved like in so many other cities, but are considered free men of the city welcome to work and pray with the rest of the population*. The Orcs of Khemennu hear of their brothers enslaved and abused in the human kingdoms of Timiro and the Western Empire, and consider themselves blessed to be living free. The clergy are careful to encourage this line of thought in sermons and speeches; subtle propaganda helping to keep the Orc population contented and controlled. The raw power wielded by the priests is impressive to the Orcs, especially those of the Pantheon of Taut, who are more inclined to show off their abilities in overt displays of power, and this helps to encourage the easily impressed Orcs' loyalty to the Church. Naturally inclined to accept their place, and not a race to shy away from a little hard work, the Orcs of Khemennu have done their bit uncomplaining for centuries. Problems only arise when large groups of Orcs from outside Khemennu come to visit. This is mercifully rare, as the 'uncivilized' Orcs tend to steer clear of cities in general and do not trust the human dominated people of Khemennu. Trading between the city and Orc tribes is most often carried out through intermediaries such as Kobold, Ogre or Eandroth tribes. When they do visit, there is often friction between the wild Orcs and the urban ones, whom the visitors consider soft sellouts, mocking them as having been 'tamed' by the humans. Keen to prove their worth, the city Orcs defend themselves, and fights often break out. Needless to say, any fights or riots are quickly and ruthlessly put down by the authorities.

* Not that slavery is banned or unheard of in Khemennu. Humans, Orcs and other races from foreign lands (especially non-believers) are fair game as far as slavery is concerned. Many persons of high status and money are likely to have an imported slave or two around the house. But with such a large pool of cheap labor in the form of Orcs and Goblins, and in keeping with the idea of a community united through faith, slavery on an industrial level is uncommon. However, forced indentured servitude is a common punishment administered for non-payment of debts or other crimes such as theft or embezzlement, and although temporary, may develop into years of effective slavery. Some of Khemennu's greatest public works have been accomplished via the exploitation of indentured laborers.

Kobolds: (12%) Forming a significant part of the population, Kobolds have become the second most influential group of

citizens in the city. Over time, they have become accepted by the humans, thought of simply as ugly Dwarves, although racial prejudices do sometimes win through. They are the second most common race amongst the priesthood and ruling class. Although the Kobolds of Khemennu live on the surface like their human and Orc neighbors, their homes and places of business are likely to have a few basements and/or secret passages, some of which form long and complicated underground networks linking several Kobold residences, and others which lead to ancient subterranean passages and crypts presumably built by Elves or Dwarves thousands of years ago during the city's founding. These passages enable the light-sensitive Kobolds to travel short distances through the city during the day without exposing themselves to the blinding sunlight, though in practice, most Kobolds use the streets like any other citizen, wearing wide-brimmed reed hats, long, wrapped headscarves, or veils (both males and females) to shield their eyes from the sun. In the areas with the densest Kobold populations, low, single-storey buildings run together with only the occasional alley or courtyard in between; the 'roofs' of the buildings effectively form the street level, and entrance into the buildings is via stairwells from the roof. Kobold temples and shops are always poorly lit, lending them a spooky, sometimes intimidating, atmosphere to surface dwellers. The densest Kobold population centers are most active just before dawn and just after dusk – that's when things really kick off! Many Kobolds are ardent worshipers of the Pantheon of Taut.

Goblins: (10%) A huge number of Goblins live in Khemennu, occupying the lowest rung of the social ladder, and looked upon with disdain by the others. If anything, the ruling class of Kobolds are even crueler to the Goblin population than the humans. Many Goblins wind up as thieves, pickpockets, beggars or con men. Some make a living as cheap labor – servants or cleaners in the low-end bars and inns. The luckiest or canniest of them earn their keep as 'house-boys' for the wealthy elite.

Hobgoblins: (0.5%) A surprisingly large number of Hobgoblins can be found in the city. City life seems to suit them well, and many make their living as con men, snake oil salesmen and low level charlatans fleecing the scores of pilgrims entering the city. Native citizens of Khemennu have learned to never trust a Hobgoblin. They have also had some success lording it over small groups of Goblins, as 'Fagin' style crime bosses or as black priests running small, independent dark cults dedicated to the various Gods of Taut.

Elves: (2%) A small percentage compared to other human-centric communities worldwide, but that represents over 20,000 Elves permanently resident in the city (more at pilgrimage time). While influential in the founding of the city, their numbers have dwindled over time, and new Elven immigrants are rare, as the dirty, chaotic, uncivilized city does not suit their tastes. What Elves there are tend to be members of the upper classes: clergymen, scholars, bureaucrats, etc., so their relatively small population belies their actual influence in city life.

Dwarves: (1.5%) Over ten thousand Dwarves live in the city, but they are overwhelmed by the huge numbers of Kobolds, who dominate the roles in city life traditionally taken up by Dwarves, such as craftsmen and smiths. Still, there are a few successful Dwarves in Khemennu, providing exclusive top quality crafts for the elite nobles and clergy who can afford it. Prices at any of these places will be through the roof. Some Dwarves may eye their lowly Kobold cousins with envy at their influence, as some

Kobolds may be jealous of the Dwarves' perceived higher status in the eyes of the humans, but there is generally little animosity between the two races.

Ogres: (2%) Historically, attacks from Ogre tribes were the bane of the early Khemennu settlers. However, over the centuries, the relationship between humans and Ogres has mellowed, and their presence in the city has become an accepted fact of life. Initially, friendly relations with Ogres were established through trade, and later they were invited into the city by the humans and Elves to be exploited as heavy labor and security. In today's modern, cosmopolitan city, they are thought of as just 'big Orcs.' However, the Ogres' belligerent attitude makes them much harder to control than Orcs, and they really contribute very little to the city other than trouble. They frequently prove themselves to be more hassle than they are worth, brawling, fighting and embarking on violent rampages. They are also more rebellious, and have been known to organize the Orcs and Goblins that look up to them against the powers that be, something the authorities are always on the lookout for. Their large size means any Ogres causing trouble are relatively easy to keep track of. If there is an incident involving Ogres and humans, the authorities will generally assume that the Ogre started it, and will act accordingly.

However, there are two redeeming factors that have helped Ogres to become accepted in society over other large monster races such as Trolls and Gromeks: Firstly, they have developed a reputation as skilled animal trainers; many guard dogs, hunting dogs and birds of prey are trained and sold in the city. Ogre trackers and animal handlers are also frequently employed on hunting trips outside the city. Secondly, the authorities secretly want to keep their urban Ogre population reasonably content, as trade with some of the neighboring Ogre tribes is essential to the economy of the city. The Ogre caravans that visit Khemennu regularly to sell hunted pelts or meat from enormous herds of cattle and sheep are vital in feeding the city's huge population.

Trolls: Like Ogres only worse. Even more violent and more likely to fight against the authorities, and harder to take down when they do, Trolls are not welcome, and are very rare. Trolls are 'discouraged' from entering the city when possible. Trolls are well known as brigands and bandit leaders, manipulating lesser beings to do their evil bidding, or as black priests gathering together large numbers of 'shorties' to follow them, posing an unacceptable threat to the official priesthood in town. However, with so many Kobolds (a natural ally of the Troll) in town, a fair few Trolls enter the city attempting to do just that. In a city of two million people, even the occasional 12 foot Troll can find a place to hide.

Giants:

Cyclops: The most common race of Giants in Khemennu. Immigrants and pilgrims from the Western Empire and the Isles of the Cyclops have drifted into the city for generations. Of all the Giant races, the Cyclops are the most readily accepted, mostly due to their homeland's long-standing alliance with the Church and the Western Empire. Those living in the city have worked hard to gain acceptance as loyal members of society, and many are well known and respected as craftsmen, merchants and community leaders. Most are loyal followers of the Church of Light and Dark, and quite a few have joined the clergy, with historical precedence for Cyclopean Bishops and High Priests. However, as with any of the 'monster races,' the ruling elite are wary of these powerful Giants, and keep a close eye on their affairs, fearful of

letting them have too much power. The authorities try to keep the Cyclops communities happy because of two important services they provide. Firstly, they hold the secrets of raising and training Gryphons; a number of Gryphon stables are located in and around the city, where the Cyclops (and their Ogre and Kobold assistants) train Gryphons for use by the Church and the wealthy elite as guard animals and attack animals. Gryphons have become associated with the god Ra and are considered by many to be sacred; mistreating a Gryphon will result in harsh punishment. Predictably, the Church also covets the secret of the Cyclops' infamous lightning weapons, which are made by the Cyclops and sold to the Church for use by their armies. The Cyclops strictly regulate the amount of lightning weaponry on the market and in the hands of the army, fobbing the Church off with constantly changing lead times and prices for their wares. By necessity, the Cyclops require larger buildings and spaces in which to live, and this has resulted in clusters of giant-sized buildings dotted around the city, creating a number of Cyclops enclaves known as 'Little Clypss,' after the capital city of the Isles of the Cyclops. Other giant-sized immigrants to the city naturally gravitate to these areas, making the authorities fearful of an increase in the Giant bloc; however, most Giant immigrants are not welcomed by the existing Cyclops population, concerned about others muscling in on their turf or having their reputation tarnished by association with murderous Trolls and Jotan or duplicitous Nimro. The Cyclops are well suited to the 'civilized' city life, and are content with their position of importance in the upper circles of society.



Jotan: These brutal Giants are responsible for a disproportionate amount of the violence and banditry across the wilder lands around the city. They are universally hated and feared throughout the city and surrounding area. Any Jotan entering the city is kept under observation from the moment they arrive. Any sign of misconduct will result in ejection – by necessity this is likely to be violent and using priestly magic or supernatural minions. Even so, a few Jotan citizens can be found, either having established themselves as renowned stonemasons or smiths (sometimes working alongside Kobold smiths) or employed as security for someone powerful and influential enough to control them and appease their neighbors.

Nimro: The rumored Kingdom of Giants at Mount Nimro is a real concern for the leaders of Khemennu. If the Fire Giants should decide to expand north, there is a real possibility that the

two civilizations will clash. Nimro Giants are well known to be clever, cunning and cruel. As such, they are viewed with strong suspicion – every Nimro could potentially be a spy! Despite this, the crowded, bustling, but comparatively civilized, city suits the Nimro well and a fair number of the Giants have set up home and flourished here. Most are not affiliated with the Nimro Kingdom, and have no desire to be. Many, in fact, see themselves as more ‘civilized’ and look down on the ‘barbarian clans’ of Mount Nimro from what they consider to be a *proper* city. Many are genuine converts to the Church of Light and Dark. However, there is no smoke without fire, and there are indeed a few spies feeding information back to Sunder Blackrock. Thus far, the Giant King is happy to bide his time, with no intentions to wage an unnecessary war. Predictably, there are also a few ambitious Nimro with aspirations to gain more power within the city. However, they are more cunning than the Ogres, Hobgoblins and other ne’er-dowells subverting the monster races, and so have remained undiscovered thus far.

Gigantes: No one wants a Gigante in the city. They are just monsters; no more welcome than a Tusker or a Mogoloth. All are killed or driven away on sight. They are found in the city only as a bodyguard or minion of someone powerful enough to stand up to, or with influence over, the local authorities.

Eandroth: The Eandroth form the largest population of the ‘exotic’ races in Khemennu, though most of them are only temporary inhabitants. Nomadic merchants and the occasional rogue have been visiting the city ever since its founding, and have become a common sight. It was perhaps visits from these early traders to the burgeoning holy city that helped to spread word of its existence and contributed to its huge growth in population. A few Eandroth merchants of all types have set up shop there, and are now considered an only slightly more unusual sight than Orcs or Kobolds. Most are seen as ‘friendly natives’; liked but perhaps a little patronized by the human majority. Many an Eandroth rogue chooses to spend some of his time in Khemennu, even if it is just for a brief period before moving on to further adventures. The Eandroth’s ubiquitous Silonar steeds are rare within the cramped city limits, but a common sight among the tents of the Eandroth encampments often found on its outskirts. The Eandroth’s ferocious mating rituals cause quite a stir, but are tolerated as long as the violence doesn’t spill over into the city proper. In fact, during mating season, young Eandroth males who live within the city limits will often make their way to one of the camps to declare their intention to fight for the right to mate with one of their females. The Eandroth’s relatively short life span (especially compared to Elves, Dwarves and Kobolds), rapid growth rate and the frequent fatalities and injuries experienced during the mating season, coupled with the transient nature of the caravans, means that their population is always in flux, with no individuals making a significant impact on the city as a whole. There seems to be a constantly shifting population of Eandroth in and around the city and many other races don’t even bother to learn their names! However, it is during the pilgrimage that the numbers of Eandroth really swell. Since Eandroth society is nomadic, it is at these times that many separate tribes come together, setting aside their differences (usually) for a short time. Though many of the distant tribes do not follow the Gods of Light and Dark, they are often found setting up camp around the city at festival time to take advantage of the huge numbers of potential customers. The

week before the pilgrimage is perhaps the busiest period of the local Eandroth economic calendar.

Over the centuries, the Eandroth caravans have brought with them a few exotic races from the Baalgor Wastelands and elsewhere, some of whom have settled in the city: **Gosai** and **Quorians** are both races that consider humans, Elves or Dwarves as allies, so it is only natural that a few have made it their home.

Quorians are fairly small in number, but a welcome addition to the population. They have proven themselves to be hard workers, and when available, are often favored by businessmen over Orcs for use as heavy or semi-skilled labor, as they offer the same strength but are more reliable. Most of the Quorians of Khemennu are those that have forsaken their ancient nomadic lifestyle and their race’s eternal quest for home, but there are those that choose to live in the city in the hope that the gods may hold the secret to finding a way back to their home dimension. While spiritual in nature, most of them steer clear of organized religion and rarely go into the clergy; any Quorian with strong mystical leanings will usually become an *Oneiromancer* – a ‘dream shaman’ (see **Baalgor Wastelands™**, page 57). Small fortune-telling or ‘dream reading’ shops are dotted all over the city. As with other mystics and psychics, the dream shamans were initially seen as a threat to the authority of the Church. To avoid this, most of the Quorian shamans pray to and honor the gods as part of their ceremonies and chants, claiming that their dreams and visions are inspired by or come directly from the gods. In this way, as with the Psi-Healers and others, the dream shamans are not only accepted by the authorities, but actually help to proliferate faith in the Church. Whether an individual Oneiromancer actually believes their dreams are innate or divinely inspired is open to question, and usually left ambiguous, but there is certainly a fair percentage that do truly believe they are conduits to the gods. Never particularly interested in gods or religion, it is only the presence of these dream shamans that links the Quorian population as a whole to the Church. Isis, Apis and Geb seem to be the firm favorites among the dream shamans.

Gosai are quite rare in Khemennu, perhaps partly due to the relative prominence of their old enemies, the Quorians, but worth a mention here because of the role they play in city politics. Famous as warriors and assassins throughout the Baalgor Wastelands, the Gosai are used to their fullest here. Small guilds and a few independent assassins find regular work throughout the city, helping to ‘simplify’ the complicated webs of intrigue in the power-hungry church hierarchy, especially among the priests of the Church of Taut. As long as they continue to serve the Church and don’t take things into their own hands, the assassins are allowed to continue their work; the priests recognizing that one day they may have need of their services themselves. A few of the permanent residents have found work as bodyguards and holy crusaders. To avoid offending the gods, the Gosai are always careful to say a little prayer to Apepi or Ammit before embarking on a job, and a prayer to Anubis for safe passage of their target’s soul once the job is done. It is widely known that a Gosai seen making a sacrifice to the shrine of Anubis has most likely recently made a kill. Note that the increasing popularity of the association of the Southern Death God, *Pith*, with Set and Anubis has been embraced most fervently by the Gosai. They will usually pay a visit to a Shrine of Pith whenever visiting the temples of Anubis.

A few other creatures have been brought to the city in Eandroth caravans: **Dragonmen** often join Eandroth clans as hon-

ored members of the tribe, but very few ever stay in the city. They are still extremely wary of other races after years of persecution by humans, Kobolds, Orcs and others. **Vrill** are another rarity, but one that is becoming more conspicuous, as a tiny population of Vrill have recently made Khemennu their home. Their curiosity piqued by rumors of the hospitals set up in the name of Apis, a few Vrill healers entered the city to volunteer their services. They are happy to honor the name of Apis in order to help others, and although small in number, have become respected members of the sect. In the past few weeks, the first Vrill curates and deacons have been initiated into the Church. All kinds of intelligent races can be found somewhere in Khemennu, with examples of almost all races found in small numbers, or at certain times of the year. These may include some of the southern human races such as **pygmies** and **head-hunters**. Even **Wolfen**, **Bearmen** and the occasional **Titan** or **Rahu-Man** from the Old Kingdom Mountains may be found during times of pilgrimage.

Ratlings: Just like the animals they resemble, Ratlings have come to the city as stowaways on shipments from the Western Empire or with hordes of pilgrims, and have insinuated themselves into the city's lowlife. While their numbers are still small, they are already considered a menace, as no one in Khemennu wants the Ratling population to get a foothold as they have in some of the seedier Western cities. As they have a habit of targeting the weak and impoverished, Ratlings are seen as a threat by all levels of society, but there are too many unexplored catacombs and crypts beneath the city to root them all out or even accurately estimate their numbers. In truth, the Ratlings are more of a threat than anyone fears. Not just a simple collection of opportunistic thieves, they have intentionally been rallied into invading Khemennu by their church. In an ambitious move, the priests of the Church of Kirgism, seeing a gap in the god market, are attempting to establish an organized thieves' guild in Khemennu – their reasoning being that there are no 'thief-gods' in the pantheon of Light and Dark. In practical terms, this looks like an unachievable goal, but the faithful of Kirgi have pushed forward as instructed, and have been surprisingly successful so far. Targeting the lowest dregs of society, mostly Goblins and Hobgoblins, the Ratlings have converted a fair number of thugs and brigands to their cause, and are attempting to organize them into a proper thieves' guild under the banner of Kirgi. In a city where they are accustomed to being the pawns of some religion or another, it doesn't seem to matter to the Goblins which god it is, and a fresh choice is tempting. Of course, if the secret guild-cult is ever discovered, all of the various sects of Light and Dark would work together to eradicate the blasphemous pretenders.

As well as Jotan, Gigantes, Trolls and Ratlings mentioned previously, there are a few other monster races generally considered as undesirables: **Gromeks** are unwanted because their aggressive, warlike nature has proven difficult to overcome in a civilized city environment, and because the leaders of the Church don't want to risk anything that may cause the Nimro Kingdom to act against them – claiming Gromeks as an ally would surely make them a target. The Gromeks in turn are isolationist and hostile toward other races, and so have never really attempted to settle in the city in any number. **Minotaurs** are damned, by the teachings of the Church, as willingly consorting with the dreaded Old Ones, and therefore enemies of Thoth and the Pantheon of Light and Dark. Any Minotaur entering the city limits is likely to be quickly tried for witchcraft and executed before the ink on the paperwork is

dry. Unfortunately, **Boogie-Men** are a recurrent problem in the slummiest areas of the city, inhabiting abandoned buildings, ruins and sewers and preying on the weak and vulnerable. They are viewed as monstrous pests by the authorities and exterminated on sight, but this stance doesn't give them full credit – some are cunning enough to have made arrangements with underground cults, criminal gangs and churches to sell kidnapped victims for sacrifice! When volunteers and condemned criminals are scarce, even the established sects may resort to such immoral tactics. Is it just coincidence that Boogie-Man sightings are most numerous near the temples of Bes? In recent times, the Boogie-Man population has dwindled; their usual places of refuge being taken over by invading Ratlings. An underground turf war has broken out, with the solitary Boogie-Men no match for the aggressive and organized Ratlings. The reptilian **Sallan** are a persistent menace on the caravan trails of the Old Kingdom, raiding merchants and pilgrims alike. All attempts to pacify (read: convert) the Sallan marauders have met with failure; the only recourse now is to use force. Bronze Lion patrols will attack and rout Sallan wherever they are found. **Harpies** are clearly a monstrous menace. However, they are found with alarming regularity near the city and surrounding farmland, attacking people, livestock and holy shrines. Harpy-extermination squads are regularly sent out from Khemennu to rid the region of their kind. They are especially bothersome along the cliffs that line the Scarlet Coast.

Sphinxes: Considered holy by the followers of Light and Dark, Sphinxes are obviously attracted to a city populated by the faithful. Selfish and narcissistic to the extreme, Sphinxes are well known to take advantage of the worshipers of Light and Dark, ingratiating themselves into a temple to live a life of luxury, revered as holy symbols of the Church, demanding that their every need is pandered to. It is inevitable that the occasional Sphinx arrives at Khemennu with this idea in mind. However, while indeed considered sacred, and granted every respect and courtesy, the priests of Khemennu have had centuries of experience and have developed a canny way of dealing with a visitor who is both revered and unwelcome. They will welcome any Sphinx visitor with open arms, showering them with praise, and inviting them into their temples. The Great Cathedral of Light and Dark and the High Temples of Ra and Harmakhis all have wings reserved for Sphinxes. However, these are always sparsely furnished and decorated: bland, stone rooms with perhaps a rug and a couple of cushions on which to sit, and little in the way of windows. Once safely sequestered in their apartments, the next step is passive resistance. The attendants assigned to a Sphinx are despatched to fetch anything the Sphinx may desire: wine, food, art, books, etc. However, these will always take hours to arrive, and when they finally do, they will be in small quantities or simply not what was asked for. The attendant priests will sincerely apologize for any inconvenience, and immediately despatch further runners to find out what went wrong, and to obtain the correct objects as requested. More hours will pass, until finally the runners return, with perhaps one more tiny morsel, or another error. And so it goes on, with the Sphinx becoming increasingly bored and frustrated at the incompetence of the attendants, and the priests apologizing profusely whilst *very slowly* attending to their requests. After a while, the Sphinx will have had enough, and will simply up and leave. The Sphinxes will often vent their anger on the attendant priests, but this is almost always done only verbally, before flying away in disgust. The priests need to demonstrate extreme pa-

tience – the Sphinx may hang about for days or weeks – but this tactic has worked countless times in the past, and has prevented any Sphinx from taking hold of the Church for its own ends. Not all Sphinxes require such handling; a slightly less self-obsessed Sphinx is counted amongst the faculty of the Khemennu College.

Supernatural Creatures: In the Palladium World, religion is real and practical. The existence of gods can be demonstrated irrefutably; priests can regularly perform miraculous acts of healing or destruction in their names. Demons, ‘angels’ and other divine minions are tangibly real, and can be summoned by the holy fathers to do their bidding. As such, incredible as it may seem, supernatural beings are a significant presence.

Demons: With so many dark priests inhabiting the city, it is only natural that demons and Deevils are present in worryingly large numbers. Any dark priest of high enough level may be blessed by their gods to receive a demon familiar to aid them with their duties, and priests are able to call upon more of these beings at will. The more powerful, ambitious or foolish of these priests love to call upon the forces of darkness to do their bidding. As a result, it is not too unusual to see demons in the streets of Khemennu. In most cases, demons summoned by dark priests are given short, specific tasks suiting their nature, such as retrieving (stealing) a particular item, beating or intimidating an enemy or rival, or (most commonly) assassination. This may also include legitimate work such as locating and bringing criminals to justice – woe betide the crook who crosses the Church of Taut. It is only natural for some of these summoned creatures to know a good thing when they see it, and stick around for a more permanent position. After all, the life of a Lesser Demon in Hades is brutal and violent, and by comparison, service to a dark priest, lowly human or not, is a tempting alternative for some. As such, a few Lesser Demons can be found in service to the more powerful of the priests and bishops of the Church, most often as security in the major temples and cathedrals. To avoid alarming or worrying the parishioners, this is *usually* done subtly, with the demons lurking in the shadows, present but not overt – rarely posted at the front door with a spear and uniform like a regular guard. At night, the demons may patrol the grounds; glimpses of dark creatures leaping between the shadows and the sounds of howls and growls serve as stark warning to potential intruders. Even during the day, demons are occasionally seen in the streets; perhaps a pair of Alu push their way through a crowd at the market, in pursuit of a criminal or off to some unknown location; above them the dark silhouette of a Gargoyle briefly crosses the sun as the creature glides between the rooftops. The citizens of Khemennu have learned to keep their noses down and their eyes averted until the creatures finish their business or pass by; the crowd will invariably then return to their daily routine, as if nothing has happened.

Due to the nature of their religious beliefs, the most common types of minion to be summoned are demons; Deevils are rarely associated with the gods of Taut. Of the demons, the **Gurgoyles** are the most common. As the lowest of Sub-Demons, they are used to being ordered around by others, and make for more controllable servants; and as mortal creatures (even long-lived and alien ones), they are also *slightly* easier to identify with and control than pure supernatural creatures like true demons. They are also more readily accepted by the populace in general – in a city containing Ogres and Cyclops, the nine-foot tall Gurgoyles, while monstrous, are not so much of a cause for alarm as in other towns. And as with all demons, they are, after all, merely minions of



their respected clergy and their beloved gods. It is not uncommon to find Gurgoyles amongst the personal guard of a major priest of darkness or protecting their temples or homes. **Alu** are the next most common, due to their close association with the death god Anubis, and are typically summoned for use as assassins, a job which they relish. Due to their large size (twice the height of a human), they are more intimidating, and usually used in a less overt fashion, with their natural ability of invisibility coming into play. In the sub-city of the Necropolis, the Alu roam the catacombs in packs, killing any intruders. **Ghouls** are another relatively common demon – a few of those summoned in the past have escaped to wander the graveyards, back alleys and dark streets at night, feeding on the dead or preying on the weak and helpless. They are considered pests and are exterminated by the city guards whenever spotted; proper disposal of the dead is important to the belief system in Khemennu, and this kind of desecration is unacceptable. Other Lesser Demons, such as **Lasae** or **Gargoylites**, are summoned when more subtle work is required, such as theft or spying – a common political tool amongst the priesthood. Or perhaps just to deliver a message; a winged Gargoylite can whizz across town faster and easier than any human messenger. Tip them with a small semi-precious stone and they'll be happy. **Gargoyles** are employed when the Church needs to bring out the

big guns, especially by the leaders of the Sect of Set. On the few occasions when these giant, winged monsters can be seen circling the skies above the city, or perched on the minarets and domes of the High Temple of Set, it is clear that someone has crossed the Church in a major way, and is in big trouble!

The established clergy know better than to consort with Greater Demons, but there are always those who think they can handle it. Therefore, a few of the infernal creatures have been brought to Khemennu in the past by the foolish or the desperate, the cunning **Raksasha** and the treacherous **Jinn** being the two favorites due to their association with Set. Some of them choose to stick around to cause their own brand of mischief, using their shape-shifting and psionic or magical powers to hide among the mortals and play out their secret schemes. **Worms of Taut** are also summoned by dark priests, particularly those of Apepi the Immortal, but they have fewer practical uses, mostly likely assigned to guard some hidden treasure or used as a none-too-subtle assassin or attack animal. A few Fire Worms and Tomb Worms have escaped their summoners over the years and have holed up in the worst slums and tunnels of the city, preying on the dead or dying. Like Ghouls, feral Tomb Worms are viewed as unclean pests to be destroyed.

The use of summoned demon minions is accepted by both sides of the Church. After all, doctrine teaches us that we must accept both the light and the darkness. Summoned creatures have proved invaluable in the past to defend the city from marauding armies and other enemies. Without them, the city may have fallen any number of times. However, misuse of demon minions is not tolerated, and will result in harsh punishment. What constitutes *misuse* is determined by the individual Tribunals and is open to interpretation. The summoning of demons by anyone other than the ordained Priests of Light and Dark is not tolerated, and is considered *witchcraft* by the court. Summoners or rival clergy flouting this law will at the very least, find themselves forcibly ejected from the city (provided that the demon has caused no harm or mischief). A return to Khemennu for a second offense or employment of an unauthorized demon in a crime will warrant execution under anti-witchcraft laws.

Of course, the most treasured minions of the Pantheon of Taut are the **Tautons**. However, their bitter, resentful and violent nature makes them suitable for only one job: *battle*. Long-term employment on guard duty or similar tasks, invariably results in the Tauton losing patience and venting its anger on the nearest poor sap. Their unbridled hatred of the Gods of Light also makes them difficult to restrain. Therefore, when summoned, it is usually for a specific and violent task – destroying an enemy of Set. They have proved themselves as deadly warriors when summoned to defend the city, and it is partly the fear of a potential army of Tautons that keeps the more aggressive of Old Kingdom warlords from mounting a full-scale attack. However, a small cadre of Tautons live permanently in the city as part of the entourage of the High Temple of Set. They technically have free roam of the city, but stay primarily within the temple complex, and do not stray far. Granting them authority and freedom has helped to lessen some of their inherent bitterness, and they serve well as symbols of the sect's power and influence; their mere presence instilling fear in their enemies.

The Tautons' opposite number, **Ramen**, are also present in Khemennu. Some say that they have come to Khemennu specifically to counter the Tauton presence; to provide a balance. Over a dozen of the noble felines live in the High Temple of Ra,

where they serve the clergy, assisting in ceremonies, joining in prayer and providing security simply by virtue of their presence. It is incredibly uplifting for the faithful to see the representatives of their god in front of their eyes on the Palladium World, and has given the Sect of Ra an enormous boost. The Ramen can also sometimes be found at the temples of Isis or Harmakhis, the High Temple of the Sun and the Great Cathedral of Light and Dark, giving praise to Ra's allies. They make regular patrols of the areas around the High Temples of the Gods of Light, hoping to inspire the populace by their presence, and stamp out any wrongdoing. In this way they are a kind of Special Forces section of the *Light Watch*, with authority to make arrests and apprehend criminals, but they answer directly to the High Priest of Ra, who is ultimately responsible for their activities, and accountable for any questionable deeds. Like Ra, the Ramen tend to see things in a very black and white, good vs evil perspective, which can make them rather overzealous in their duties. The Ramen choose to defer to the High Priest's word to show that all are accountable to the law. At times, the Ramen have approached the various High Priests of Anhur, keen to demonstrate their respect for the lion-headed god. However, they have never been made welcome; the rivalry between the two sects in Khemennu appears to be too great for the High Priests of Anhur to accept *Ra's Knights* into the fold. However, with some of the current members, that appears to be mellowing – the 'Pride Leader' of the Ramen has been recently asked by a high-ranking Holy Crusader of Anhur to participate in a ceremony bestowing medals of honor on some brave soldiers in the *Bronze Lions* – the Sect of Anhur's standing army.

A recent addition to the list of supernatural creatures to inhabit Khemennu are the **Phoenixi**. A number of them arrived unannounced at the city months ago and have set up home in the High Temple of Bennu (see the description of the Sect of Bennu). Whether the Phoenixi have taken it upon them themselves to show their presence in Khemennu, or whether they have been sent by Bennu (unlikely, given her record), is a mystery. As accomplished dimensional explorers, it is more likely that it was simply the inherent curiosity of the Phoenixi that led them here. The creatures themselves and the High Priest are careful to leave it ambiguous. The Phoenixi generally keep to themselves, playing only a minor part in religious ceremonies, but have been seen leaving the temple complex with increasing frequency, their curiosity getting the better of them. They have now become a regular sight in some parts of town; marveled at, but accepted. One of their number, perhaps the most inquisitive, has even moved out of the temple and rented a room at an inn like a normal person, not because of any conflict with his fellows or the priests, but driven by a desire to experience the city first-hand. They have so far tried to distance themselves from the rivalry between the various sects, aside from giving the customary respect and service to the sect of their beloved goddess.

The City Itself

Orientation

Khemennu is a roughly elliptical city in the center of a flat plain, its longer axis running north-south. There are a few low hills in and around the city, but for the most part, it is reasonably flat. About two-thirds of the way up from the southern end

to the north, a shallow river runs through the city from east to west. The river is named “Little Nu’ak” after the great river of Ma’ip, but it is a weak reflection of its namesake. The river cannot hope to provide all of the needs of its inhabitants nor cope with the huge amounts of refuse and effluence dumped into its waters daily. There are only a few water pipes and aqueducts that funnel water directly from the river into the city, and the vast majority of these are on the eastern side of town, where the water is cleanest. Only the wealthiest and most important can afford direct access to clean(ish) water, and so many of these underground channels lead to the major temples and administrative buildings. Some buildings incorporate large subterranean cisterns for water storage, many of which were once ancient Dwarven or Kobold tunnels, disused crypts or tombs. Though it has not yet proved to be an issue, this network of flooded tunnels could pose a potential security risk. However, it is rumored that the reservoir under the High Temple of Set is quite literally swimming with demon *Aquatics*. By the time the Little Nu’ak reaches halfway through Khemennu, it has transformed into a slow, sludge-laden ditch. The banks downstream are rife with detritus and the areas bordering the river thick with an oppressive, powerful stench, especially the slums of the ‘South Bank’ area, where a bend in the river causes a build-up of sediment and waste. The residents of the slums themselves contribute significantly to the pollution, as many of them are guilty of dumping their waste directly into the river, from its banks or directly from the windows of their homes. As the river emerges from western edge of the city, it is little more than a boggy mire, where the largest rubbish dumps can be found. Entire communities make a miserable living sifting through the trash and selling what little of use can be found. Note that, unlike the true River Nu’ak, the waterway in Khemennu does not split the city into Light and Dark. Temples to the Gods of Light and the Gods of Taut are found on both sides of the river.

The city has no distinct quarters or districts; the South Bank is one of the few large neighborhoods of Khemennu that can be readily identified as a single uniform area as opposed to the patchwork feel of the rest of the city. It is probably the most densely populated part of an already overcrowded city. The buildings are so closely packed that little or no light finds its way to the narrow lanes below. In many areas, the roofs of opposing buildings virtually touch. Clotheslines, shop signs and makeshift balconies span the gaps, further reducing the available light. The rooftops have become popular gathering places for the locals, especially those living on the upper floors. This is a common state of affairs in many areas across the city, but nowhere is it as prevalent as the South Bank. The unpleasantly dark and gloomy streets are home to some of Khemennu’s poorest and most disenfranchised inhabitants. The dimly lit streets make an ideal home for the light-sensitive Kobold residents, but unlike the exclusive Kobold enclaves elsewhere, the South Bank is home to at least as many human, Orc and Goblin inhabitants, amongst others. Crime is a problem, but not as much as one might think, as South Bankers need to stick together and support each other to survive. Outsiders venturing into its dark alleyways, however, are a different matter, and are considered ‘fair game.’ This area also has the fewest official churches and temples; worshipers tend to travel out to the neighboring churches on holy days, or pray at makeshift shrines out on the streets. The southern edge of the slums butts right up against the walls of the equally crowded Necropo-

lis. The two districts are disturbingly similar in appearance, one packed with the city’s lowliest citizens, the other with its dead. Indeed, some areas of the South Bank were in fact, historically part of the Necropolis – old tombs and mausoleums that have been reclaimed by the living during times of urban restructuring and expansion and refitted for use as homes, or (in ancient times when the Necropolis was more accessible) where families fallen on hard times had no option but to take up residence in their only remaining asset – their family tombs. An eerie prospect to say the least, though some residents actually prefer to live here to be “close to their ancestors.” Any journey from the center to the western edge of the city means either braving the South Bank or taking a long detour southwards around the Necropolis or northwards over the river.

A long, straight, wide boulevard cuts the city in two as it runs roughly north by northeast from the southern tip of the city to the main complex of temples south of the river. The *Avenue of Dawn*, as it is known, may once have been lined with trees, but encroaching buildings consumed these long ago. Still, the buildings along the highway are lofty and richly decorated, comprising many exclusive and expensive shops. On the western side of the Avenue of Dawn lies the Necropolis, near the approximate geographical center of the city, while further northwards and off to the east is the High Temple of Set. At the road’s end, a number of major places of worship can be found in close proximity, the center of which is the Sun Square, with the Sun Temple/High Temple of Harmakhis Complex (the place where the Sun Disc can be found) on the eastern side and the High Temple of Ra on the north. Further to the northwest, beside the river, is the Khemennu College – a respected institute of learning run by the Sect of Thoth. To the east is the administrative center of the city; a series of plazas and grand buildings which include The Hall of Judgement (which houses The Tribunal), The Synodic Gallery, The Council Chamber and The Chancery Building. This section of the city also contains the spiritual capital of Khemennu: The Great Cathedral of Light and Dark. The Cathedral is intended as a catch-all place of worship where no sect or god is superior to the other and is the site of many of the city’s major ceremonies. It is technically the seat of the Metropolitan Bishop, but given the considerable executive duties of that role, the day-to-day operation of the Cathedral is the remit of the Dean of the Cathedral, Sub-Bishop Yarl Toren, a haughty Elf who positively revels in the pomp and circumstance of his role. When The Mediator himself conducts sermons and religious ceremonies, he will generally hold them here. Another road, the *Avenue of Dusk*, leads northwards from the Sun Square to the main bridge across the Little Nu’ak, the *Bridge of Feathers*. The bridge was once a magnificent, wide thoroughfare, but centuries of construction have turned it into a cramped, narrow alleyway with an array of buildings looming overhead. If you didn’t know better, you could never tell you were on a bridge at all! Construction of a new bridge further upstream is currently underway, in an attempt to reduce congestion. Once complete, it will provide easy access from the council buildings and Cathedral of Light and Dark to destinations north. Beyond the Bridge of Feathers, the road continues northwards as *Ma’at Boulevard*, but it is not as wide or grand as its equivalent in the south. The authorities encourage all pilgrims to enter from the south of the city at festival time and exit to the north, to try to keep some semblance of order, but not everyone pays heed, and the boulevard can easily become gridlocked. Prominent High

Temples in the northern third of the city include that of Isis, Bast, and the Pyramid of Osiris, near the city's northern border.

There are no city walls – or rather there are many city walls, but none of them meet each other and none of them are on the outside of the city. As the separate areas of Khemennu grew, built their own defenses, and eventually merged with each other, walls were erected, relocated, torn down, knocked down, or simply stolen for housing. Now it seems impossible and unnecessary to surround such a huge city with a perimeter wall – an invading force may be able to penetrate its outskirts, but directing a conquering army through the city's convoluted streets is a near impossible task. Members of the Light Watch are stationed at all major roads into the city, but there are countless more that remain unmanned. A good distance into the city, along the Avenue of Dawn, is Ra's Gate, once at the city's edge but now just another part of the sprawl that is Khemennu. Still considered by many to be the official 'entrance' to the city, Ra's Gate consists of an ornately carved archway spanning the avenue, expanding into two large gatehouses on each side, both of which have been heavily remodeled over the centuries. The outside of the building is impressive and stately, but the inside is functional and basic, essentially just a big police station. The one remaining city gate is the Bronze Gate, in the southeast. Just beyond the Bronze Gate (and technically outside the city, though it is never clear exactly where the city begins and ends) are the Bronze Lions' main barracks and training grounds. The Sect of Anhur essentially controls this particular entrance to the city. Anyone who is an enemy of Ra but a friend to the Pantheon of Taut can find access through the Bronze Gate.

Sanitation

In such an old, unplanned, poorly laid out city, one of the biggest issues the authorities face is sanitation. There is little or no sewage system in the city; the ground beneath its streets is home to tombs, crypts and Kobold-built tunnels that were constructed long before anyone thought of sewers, leaving little room for anything new. Even in more opulent areas where sewer pipes exist, they are merely sluices that run directly into the overburdened river. For centuries the problem of waste disposal has been solved in the simplest way possible, utilizing the biggest resource the city has: manpower. Scores of people are employed to collect rubbish, empty cess pits and scoop up the human and animal waste that is routinely dumped into the gutters, piling it into little hand-carts and transferring it to larger, horse-drawn wagons for transportation out of the city to be dumped, used as fertilizer on the surrounding fields, or dried and returned to the city as cheap fuel. This is not appealing work, and the vast majority of those employed in this industry are lowly Goblins, but also include humans, Kobolds, Hobgoblins and Orcs of the lowest classes. Regardless of race, those who take on this kind of work are generally known by the term 'Dung Goblins.' Despite the perceived low status of this job, the Dung Goblins are conscious of the vital role they play and receive a relatively high payment for their services. On more than one occasion, the Dung Goblin guild has called a strike, bringing the city to its knees in demand for better pay and working conditions. The city's people still shudder as they recall the month-long 'Great Stench.' The current chief of the *Union of Excremental Conveyance*, Gonbad the Fragrant, is easily the most powerful Goblin

in the city, and the UEC is one of the most influential non-religious organizations in Khemennu.

Navigating the City

The City of Khemennu is a huge, sprawling collection of enclaves, ghettos and suburbs all on top of each other, with no well-defined quarters or structured layout one would expect from a smaller city. Each of the High Temples and other major religious buildings forms a mini city-center in its own right. As these hubs flow into each other and overlap, the various districts of the city muddle up and merge together. With the exception of the South Bank, there is no one area of the city one could call the 'good' or 'bad' part of town; the homes of the wealthy may border those of the poor. Slums meld into marketplaces; markets into mansions, mansions into industrial centers. The whole city has a confusing, jumbled-up feel. Needless to say, navigating such a city can be problematic to say the least, even for residents, let alone strangers. In response to this, enterprising young locals across the city have set themselves up as guides or 'street scouts.' On many a street corner, they can be seen offering their services to likely strangers for a few coins. In fact, the services of these pathfinders can prove invaluable for those unfamiliar with the city. Many of the scouts are young children, street urchins and the like. They may answer to a crooked 'kidsman' or crime boss, or may answer to no one. Many are human, but Orc, Kobold and Goblin scouts are also common. Even adult Goblins may end up trying to eke out a living in this way. Of course, there is always the possibility that a guide may lead his unsuspecting customers into a dark alley or dead-end street to be set upon by muggers, and this does indeed happen. However, this sort of behavior is frowned upon by the other scouts, as a bad reputation will affect everyone's business. Crooked guides will find themselves attacked or run out of the area by a united front from their fellows. Locals soon learn where the safest guides operate. For instance, one may be advised not to pick up a street scout at Anhur's Corner or you'll get jumped; try the ones in U'Selekma Square. Unfortunately, race does come into play – humans are more likely to get robbed by Kobold or Goblin guides and vice versa. To be safe, humans tend to stick with human guides, Goblins with Goblins, etc., though this is by no means foolproof. One to three gold pieces will see you led to most places in the city, depending on the distance; a measly eight gold pieces will usually buy you a guide for the full day.

Navigating the confusing layout without assistance requires a successful *Land Navigation* roll at -15%. Even life-long citizens of Khemennu receive a -5% penalty in unfamiliar areas. Blind corners, subways, viaducts and crowded squares means that you can suddenly and unexpectedly find yourself in a strikingly different area to the one you just left or back to the one you started out from. Even trying to follow landmarks such as the city walls, riverside or the wall of the Necropolis may not always work, the path blocked by a building or wall and forcing the traveler off course. Because of this unusual layout, instead of providing a definitive map of the city, I have created a table of the various streets, places and neighborhoods a traveler may find themselves in. Should a character fail their Navigation check, roll percentile dice and consult the following table to see what type of environment they find themselves in. This table can also be used for those who are simply wandering aimlessly through the city from area to area with no particular destination in mind. The table de-

scribes the basic setting; it is left to the Game Master to fill in the details. With a little imagination, two locations of the same type may be very different from each other. Should a player wish to return to any of the locations accidentally discovered, he can do so provided he makes a successful Navigation roll next time.

Note: This doesn't apply to the principal thoroughfares through the city such as the Avenue of Dawn or to the main squares around the Sun Temple Complex, The Necropolis, the Cathedral of Light and Dark, etc. If travelers stick to these well-known, relatively open areas they should have no problems finding their way around.

Table of potential city locations:

01-03: Liminal Area. Located at a border between two markedly different neighborhoods, e.g. a posh area on one side of a road, and ghetto on the other. Although they exist right on top of each other, the two communities live entirely separate lives and never the twain shall meet. One of the neighborhoods will be the one the players have just left, the other is up to the G.M., but should be as different as possible. The characters can choose to enter the new area or continue to follow the road that forms the boundary between the two.

04-07: Religious Center. A church of Light and Dark or a temple to one of the Cosmic Gods. There are over three hundred churches and temples dotted around the city, and they often become more of a center for local residents than the town halls or market squares. The church is likely to perform some secondary service for the local community, such as providing basic education for local children, healing, embalming the deceased or hosting local events. The smaller ones may even supplement their income plying a trade, making and selling wine, honey, herbs or holistic medicines. The resident priest also acts as judge and arbiter for local disputes.

08-10: High Temple. The characters have stumbled on one of the eighteen High Temples of the Cosmic Gods! These form the major epicenters of Khemennu. They are all large, ornate buildings, surrounded by plazas and wide roads lined with statues, and high-class shops and housing (though this may change as soon as one turns a corner). Whether or not the High Priest of the Sect is in residence, perhaps performing a sermon or addressing his flock, is up to the GM. If preferred, this can instead be a Cathedral of Light and Dark.

11-13: Civic Center. The location of a town hall, council building, community center, etc. It is likely to have an open square outside for hosting official public events. The bureaucrats of the Chancery can be seen coming and going. It is well patrolled by the guards of the Light Watch, who will be sure to move on any beggars or troublemakers holding demonstrations outside.

14-17: Crossroads. A busy intersection, full of life. There are likely to be peddlers here or impromptu market stalls, or a speakers' corner where preachers, bards or rabble-rousers address the passing crowds. Beggars or 'street scouts' may also be present.

18-20: Upper-Class Residences. Whatever are scum like you doing here? The affluent citizens of this neighborhood will look haughtily down on any adventuring types with disdain and suspicion from the balconies of their mansions. Ornate carriages ferry them to and fro through the chaos of the city in luxurious isolation. Although there is plenty of wealth here, security is tight and crime is low.

21-24: Middle-Class Residences. A fairly safe area to be in. The residents here represent the lower level clergy, bureaucrats, skilled craftsmen and moderately successful merchants. There may be a sense of one-upmanship or 'keeping up with the Joneses' in this neighborhood. Strangers are eyed suspiciously as the locals don't want anything to disturb their safe and boring lives. You can bet everyone knows everyone else's business here. Any trouble starts here and the Light Watch will be called in a matter of seconds.

25-28: Slum. Looks like someone took a wrong turn. The filthy, crumbling buildings here house the poorest citizens of Khemennu. The streets are like open sewers. Dozens of eyes stare intently at the interlopers from all sides. Poverty and misery breed crime and desperation – watch your step. Unless you look the part yourself; then you might discover that, even among those dismissed as a sea of anonymous degenerates by the rest of the population, you may find a friendly community of real people, just like anywhere else.

29-30: Hidden Gem. A lovely secluded square off the beaten path, clean and safe. A few well-tended trees decorate the square, small children are playing happily, the surrounding houses are reasonable and in good condition. Even at night there are none of the usual beggars and criminals hiding in the shadows. A little family-run B&B here could very well prove to be one of the nicest and safest places to stay in town.

31-34: Cultural Center. The district is home to a number of establishments meant for a better class of entertainment such as a theater, concert hall, opera house, art gallery, museum, etc. Minstrels and jugglers may be performing in the streets. The surrounding homes, restaurants, hotels and bars are suitably classy. But there may be pickpockets present or beggars hoping for a hand-out from the wealthy theater-goers.

35-38: Entertainment Center. All kinds of fun entertainment for the lower classes. Rowdy inns, boarding houses and music halls may be home to shockingly indecent plays, dirty jokes, lewd songs and dancing girls. Back rooms house gambling dens, dog fights, cock fights, tomb-worm fights (!), bare-knuckle boxing matches or worse. Alcohol is cheap and plentiful and the entertainment often flows out onto the streets at night. Brawls are common but rarely deadly.

39-42: Marketplace. During the day it is full of stalls, selling all kinds of everyday, cheap wares. It is crowded, noisy and chaotic, with a high chance that there are pickpockets at large. At night the market place is eerily empty and desolate, populated only by the homeless and those who should be elsewhere.

43-46: High Street. Lined with shops, traders, craftsmen, inns, etc., of all kinds. If you're looking for a particular type of store, this is where it'll be. There is a 75% chance of finding an establishment selling the goods you are after.

47-48: Wholesalers' Market. A farmers' market where huge stocks of goods are brought or driven in for purchase in bulk quantities for resale. Depending on the day, it may be crammed with herds of cattle, goats or sheep, barrels full of fish, cartloads of grain, etc. Is as packed and rowdy as festival day every day of the year. Even at night there may be animals moaning in the dark as they await sale the next day.

49-50: Flying Bazaar. Temporary markets or bazaars appear unexpectedly all around the city, only to disappear just as suddenly. The fences behind this phenomenon are here to sell their ill-gotten goods as quickly as possible and hightail it out of there

before the authorities realize what is going on. You can buy almost anything here if you can pay the price and don't mind where it came from.

51-53: Industrial Center. Large-scale businesses such as tanneries, slaughterhouses, breweries, stonemasons, furniture manufacturers, etc. Bustling with activity. Will take little interest in passers-by unless they are looking for work or negotiating a bulk purchase.

54-56: Warehouse District. There is always a need to store food and other goods that enter the city during boom times for distribution throughout the year. However, with space at such a premium, warehouses are narrow and tall, and packed to the bursting point. A lot of goods are stored in underground cellars to save space and to keep them cool. There is always the temptation of theft, and security is tight – strangers wandering about will be firmly questioned. In times of shortage, whole crowds of desperate citizens may storm the warehouses en masse, demanding food.

57-58: Cottage Industry. A small lane where independent smiths, carpenters, masons, scribes, rug-makers, basket weavers, seamstresses, etc. make their living. They may sell their wares from home, or more likely, take them to market or elsewhere. But the players may find a good deal buying direct, if they are friendly and courteous to the craftsmen here.

59-61: Grand Avenue. Wide and well-kept. Reasonably safe and easy to navigate (+10% on next Land Navigation roll, if applicable). If the players choose to follow the avenue to its final destination it will probably lead to one of the High Temples or main civic buildings.

62-64: Spaghetti Junction. A wall in front, a subway beneath, steps to the top, an archway to the left and an alley to the right. Can't tell which way to go: -25% on the next Land Navigation roll!

65-68: Narrow Lane. Buildings encroach on you from each side, almost joining at the top to form a roof, making the lane dark and ominous. The gutters are full of filth thrown from the upper windows. A dark alleyway in any city can be dangerous; the characters had better be on their guard.

69-72: Kobold Enclave. The street level rises to the rooftops, above a confusing network of covered streets, dimly-lit shops, secret shrines and underground passages. Residents are wary of non-Kobolds but not necessarily hostile to them. See the Kobold description in the population section for more details. To travel through this enclave in the direction desired, the character should use the *Underground Navigation* skill in place of Land Navigation.

73-75: Giant-Sized Enclave. Suddenly everything gets bigger! Buildings may be only slightly higher than those surrounding the neighborhood, but with fewer stories. Doors are twenty feet high (6.1 m), windows eight feet (2.4 m) off the ground, and a flight of steps seems like an assault course! Cyclops and other Giants stride around loftily in all senses of the word, intentionally oblivious to the shorties at their feet. Get out of the way! There may be opportunities here that one cannot find elsewhere, but any non-Giant will be, ahem, short-changed.

76-78: Land of the South Winds Enclave. A little home from home for immigrants from the Land of the South Winds. Outward impressions are of a cheery, bright neighborhood with colorfully decorated buildings and many exotic restaurants. Shopkeepers and restaurateurs are welcoming, calling to passers-by to try out

their establishments. However, former citizens of the 'Land of Ten Thousand Cults' are bound to include a few ne'er-do-wells, possibly involved in drugs, forbidden magic or the worship of dark gods.

79-81: Major Plaza. Has multiple functions: may be used as a marketplace, for parades, demonstrations, religious gatherings etc., but is always big, surrounded by important, ornate buildings and is a focal point for local residents.

82-83: Abandoned Area. Foreclosed mortgage, unstable buildings or the site of a recent fire, cave-in or other damage, for whatever reason, the building or buildings here have been abandoned. Who knows who or what may have taken up residence?

84-86: Construction Site. A work in progress. The laborers here may be demolishing an area, repairing or building anew, but whatever it is they have spilled out to cover the surrounding area, causing chaos. The characters may have to navigate the hazardous worksite or be forced to turn back. Also, perhaps the reason for the building is of interest: has there been an influx of cash from the government or an individual to inject life into the area? Why here? Have people been displaced by the builder? Is the work a result of a disaster that occurred here? What (or who) caused the damage? In a city undermined by thousands of tunnels, perhaps a section of the ground has collapsed into the catacombs below.

87-89: Wall. Perhaps enclosing a major holy site (possibly the Necropolis?) or a wealthy suburb, a section of old city wall or whatever, the area is dominated by a huge, featureless wall at least 20 feet (6.1 m) high. People living in the wall's shadow have set up stalls, lean-tos and podiums from which to sell their wares or preach their gospels. A significant detour around the wall may be required – a -5% penalty is incurred on the next Land Navigation roll to get back on track.

90-91: Walled Garden. A small oasis of green in the city. Often includes a shrine to one of the gods (typically Isis, Apis or Geb) and is often tended by a priest, retired priest or acolyte. The enclosed nature of these gardens makes them ideal locations for clandestine meetings. Gates are usually locked at night.

92-94: Large Community Building. Such as a hospital, asylum, school, seminary (priest school) or a library. Possibly a workhouse for the poor or even a prison. All will be church-run facilities with a strong religious focus. Many are understaffed and underfunded. Charitable donations will be gratefully received. If near the river, perhaps this could be the Khemennu College of Thoth itself!

95-96: Cemetery. Death is big business in Khemennu and a cemetery can form a whole neighborhood in itself, surrounded by morgues, undertakers, chapels and the homes of their employees. There will always be a small temple to Anubis, Ammit, Nephthys or even Pith located nearby. If poorly maintained, 'pests' such as Ghouls or Tomb Worms may be an issue. If near the center of the city or the main avenue, this could even be the Necropolis itself!

97-98: Back the way you came. Somehow you've managed to circle back to the neighborhood you were in before the last one. You'd better hope it was a nice place and that you didn't make any enemies there!

99-00: The City's Edge. How did you get all the way out here? The buildings unexpectedly open out onto the vast plains of the Old Kingdom, with no sign of a border, checkpoint or wall. It may open out onto grassland, farmland, or there may be a sea of tents belonging to one of the many nomadic tribes that visit the city, such as Orcs or Eandroth. Do they welcome visitors?

Determining a religious building

Whenever the players happen upon a church or temple, the G.M. can decide for himself which god or gods are worshiped there, or may randomly roll percentile dice and consult the following table:

- 01-10: Church of Light and Dark (full pantheon)
- 11-12: Osiris
- 13-20: Ra
- 21-26: Thoth
- 27-34: Isis
- 35-41: Harmakhis
- 42-44: Bennu
- 45-49: Apis
- 50-57: Set
- 58-65: Anubis
- 66-69: Apepi
- 70-73: Amon
- 74-79: Anhur
- 80-82: Ammit
- 83-85: Bes
- 86-88: Geb
- 89-93: Bast
- 94-95: Upuat
- 96-97: Nephthys (in use)
- 98-99: Nephthys (abandoned)
- 00: Other (G.M.'s choice)

The Advocate of Dark's face had contorted into a sneer as soon as she opened her mouth. "In the end, that is all that matters."

"Quite." Bishop Fassi wrung his hands together in what Rystrom assumed he thought was a friendly manner. "Now, Mr. Khejas – tell me more about your traveling companion..."

The door burst open, and in its place stood a disheveled priest in dour, monkish robes and an ill-fitting golden chain. He was panting furiously and had a look that said, 'I haven't slept for a week, but when I did it was in the clothes I'm wearing now.'

The Advocate of Dark reacted with an unwarranted outburst, "WHAT is the meaning of this intrusion?"

Bishop Fassi flashed him a brief look of disapproval, but the smile quickly returned, "Ah, Chancellor Muhasi, what brings you here in such a rush? Looking your usual elegant self, I see."

The Chancellor made a half-hearted attempt at straightening his robe. "There's been a murder..."

Khemennu is administered and ministered to by the Church of Light and Dark, who have complete authority in all matters, both religious and secular. The ultimate ruling body of the Church is The Tribunal, beneath which is The Synod, a council made up of the eighteen High Priests of the Eighteen Cosmic Gods, and alongside that is The Council of Clergy, comprising all the priests of Light and Dark in the city. The clerics of the city consider their Church to be an autonomous subdivision of the worldwide Church of Light and Dark; their leader, the Patriarch of the Khemennu Church, has independent authority to govern his archdiocese as he sees fit.

The Tribunal

The Tribunal is the supreme governing body of the Church of Light and Dark in Khemennu, and by extension, the city itself. It has three members: **The Advocate of Light**, **The Advocate of Dark** and **The Mediator**. The relationships between these three positions define the policies and decisions made in the city. **The Advocate of Light** is the supreme representative of the Church of Light and the Pantheon of Ra, and is expected to argue their case in all things. **The Advocate of Dark** is his opposite number, representing the Church and Pantheon of Taut. Issues brought to the Tribunal (usually by either the Synod, the Metropolitan Bishop or the Chancellor – see below) are deliberated by the Advocates, each of whom is expected to take the opposite view of that held by the other. This is but one expression of the doctrine that both light and darkness are necessary in any situation, that both sides are valid and therefore must be heard and given fair consideration. All of the laws of the city and the major issues of church doctrine are argued and decided upon in this manner. Although the Advocates must remain objective and not let personal opinions detract from their responsibilities, in effect there are many occasions where the argument on one side or the other is only a token gesture for the sake of accepted convention. It is the job of **The Mediator** to preside over these hearings, and to encourage and direct his Advocates, ensuring each case is made thoroughly and fairly. It is then the responsibility of the Mediator to make the final decision (technically, each member of the Tribunal gets to vote on the issue, but the Advocates are expected to vote for 'their' side, effectively always giving the Mediator the deciding vote. It is almost unheard of for the Advocates to vote differently,

The Politics of Khemennu

"Fascinating!" Bishop Fassi's inane grin grew even wider, if that was at all possible. "What an adventure! What an incredible story!"

"Indeed." It was the voice of the sullen Advocate of Dark, the Pantheon of Taut's supreme representative in Khemennu. He looked down his nose at Rystrom with undisguised contempt. "One could scarcely believe it were true."

Rystrom puffed himself up as best he could under the circumstances. "I assure you, your Grace, it is all true." The scholar's voice could not help but tremble as he tried vainly to ignore the menacing presence behind the Advocate. The huge Gargoyle in the shadows grunted and folded its arms.

Fassi noticed Rystrom's demeanor. "Oh, don't worry, Mr. Khejas – His Grace the Advocate has only brought his, ah, assistant along to intimidate you."

"It's working."

"Still, an entire kingdom of Giants! It is difficult to believe."

"More so than a city of millions in the middle of the Old Kingdom?"

"Point taken, Mr. Khejas, point taken."

Rystrom had been lied to many times and was quite sure that this was one of them. Bishop Fassi had listened attentively to the story of Rystrom's journey across the Baalgor Mountains and through the Nimro Kingdom, and he was convinced that there wasn't a single part of it that Fassi didn't already know.

"Thank merciful Harmakhis that you escaped with your life." It was the Advocate of Light, quiet until now. In stark contrast to her colleagues, her concern seemed to be totally genuine.

and is usually the result of a conspiracy against an ineffective or tyrannical Mediator). The Mediator's decision is always final; he is the ultimate authority in the city and the supreme head of the Khemennu arm of the Church of Light and Dark.

The Khemennu Synod

The High Priests of the Eighteen Cosmic Gods

The second level of government is the Khemennu Synod. It is made up of a council of eighteen clergymen, each one elected by his or her contemporaries as the High Priest of their respective sect of the Church, representing one of the Eighteen Cosmic Gods; the patrons of the city. Also known as the Council of Eighteen, this body meets much less frequently than the other bodies, coming together only to resolve important issues or to discuss and settle ecumenical matters of Church doctrine and practice. Sessions are presided over by the Tribunal, and are often raucous affairs, with tempers flaring and voices raised on both sides, requiring the most skilled of Mediators to reach any sort of conclusion or compromise (in most instances, the Tribunal meets independently to decide upon regular matters in their absence, although the Advocates will usually be submitting topics communicated to them by one of their High Priests). The Synod is divided into two sections, with seating arranged in tiers facing one another, contributing to the confrontational theme. To the right of the Mediator sit the High Priests of Light, and to the left the High Priests of Taut. (**Note:** The High Priests of Bast and Geb sit on the side of Light, and the High Priests of Upuat and Nephthys on the side of Dark.) The Advocates of Light and Dark are expected to both support and control their colleagues on each side, and help to summarize and rationalize their arguments. The members of the Synod are properly addressed as (for instance): The Venerable Asazi Sahin, High Priest of the Khemennu Sect of Ra (or Isis, or Set, etc.).

The Council of Clergy

Each and every parish priest of the Church of Light and Dark (not the priests of the Eighteen Sects) in Khemennu is technically a part of this council, and is entitled to attend and speak for their parish when in session. Note that this does not include every citizen who is a 'Priest O.C.C.,' but only those who have jurisdiction over a church and/or parish, not their aides or subordinates, or those priests assigned to the Chancery, etc. The exact level of involvement varies from priest to priest: some almost never bother to turn up for council sessions, focusing instead on their local duties; some may take part in the philosophical and ecumenical discussions but shun the political side of things; whilst others spend almost all of their time at council, leaving their churches in the hands of their curates, deans and other subordinates. These more politically dedicated (some would say *ambitious*) clergymen comprise an informal semi-permanent council who, by default, end up being responsible for representing the Light and Dark priesthood as a whole. The Council of Clergy is not directly subservient to the Synod, as the two assemblies are considered separate and independent, but in practice, an individual priest will usually show deference to a High Priest of the Synod in respect for his title. The head of the Council of Clergy is **The Metropolitan Bishop**, who is elected by the council from within their ranks. He is their ultimate representative, with the authority to approach

the Synod and the Tribunal directly to speak on the Council's behalf. The Metropolitan is one of the most important positions in the Church hierarchy; past evidence has shown that in times when the city has a weak Mediator and the Synod degrades into partisanship and squabbling, it is the Metropolitan who holds the true power in Khemennu. The Metropolitan is also recognized as the hardest job in government; the ability to juggle the diverse issues and opinions of the various priests of the council and keep the majority happy is a rare one, and one that leads many a successful Metropolitan to go on to become successful Mediators.

The relationship between the Khemennu Church of Light and Dark (as represented by the Council of Clergy) and the Sects of the Eighteen Cosmic Gods is complicated and sometimes conflicting. The city is geographically divided into *parishes*; each one presided over by a Priest of the Church of Light and Dark. While all of the temples of the various Cosmic Sects are located within these parish boundaries, they are considered separate entities, and report directly to their High Priests, *not* the local Parish Priest. The sects do not structure their organization by geography, as their temples are often either based close to the main temple of the sect, or in scattered locations isolated from any other temples. Disagreements between local priests of Light and Dark and the priests of the Cosmic Sects within their jurisdiction are common, and take up a large portion of the council's time. The eighteen High Temples are considered to be autonomous enclaves within the city, completely immune to influence from the main Church. **Note:** The holy buildings of the Church of Light and Dark in Khemennu are known as churches (and Cathedrals), while those of the Sects of the Eighteen Cosmic Gods are known as temples (and High Temples).

The Chancery

The Chancery is the administrative arm of the Church of Light and Dark; effectively the bureaucrats and civil servants who carry out the everyday mundane tasks required in running the city. Although not involved in any services or other religious duties, the Chancery is still technically a part of the Church, and a fairly high proportion of its staff are former priests (low level Priest O.C.C. (one or two) with a second O.C.C. covering their role as an administrator – technically equivalent to Noble, Merchant or Scholar, depending on responsibilities) or failed priests – those who couldn't make the grade or dropped out prior to ordination. The Chancery is responsible for all of the real work carried out in the city, from record keeping and tax collection to maintenance of the civic buildings, roads, wells and rain cisterns. The bureaucrats of the Chancery report directly to the Tribunal, but in practical terms, the Chancery is allowed to run itself, so long as everything is running smoothly. The leader of the Chancery, and an influential figure in everyday life in Khemennu, is known as **The Chancellor**. The Tribunal expects regular reports on progress, and the Chancellor is permitted to bring to the Tribunal anything he thinks requires their attention or authorization. As holder of the highest non-ecclesiastical office in the city, the Chancellor is often looked on by the non-religious citizens of the city as their man with the ear of the Tribunal (or should that be *less* religious, as virtually all citizens are worshipers of the Church of Light and Dark to some degree – really those who value secular priorities, such as earning a living and putting food on the table, over religious ones). This group often includes the more influential mer-

chants and craftsmen. With direct access to the Tribunal, clergy of all ranks and key players in trade and industry, a shrewd and politically minded Chancellor can exert his influence over many areas of society. However, the Synod are always wary of a Chancellor who appears to be pushing his role too far.

Regalia of the Tribunal

The offices of the Mediator and Advocates are symbolized by the unique headgear they all wear. In addition to the prestige conveyed by these items, all provide the wearer with some bonuses and abilities, but the Tribunal is careful not to make the exact nature of the powers known to outsiders.

The Advocate of Light can be recognized by the tall, white, bottle-shaped hat known as the *Hadjet* or 'White Crown.' It is a holy item that enables the wearer to call forth a modified Globe of Daylight that hovers just above and in front of the crown (cannot be moved independently) in the form of a 'sun disc.' It has all the normal effects of a Globe of Daylight. The White Crown also provides the wearer with a +4 to save vs psionics, +2 to save versus mind control and possession, is impervious to the abilities of the Red Crown, and allows the wearer to use any of the following psychic abilities three times a day: Mind Block, Mind Bock Auto-Defense, Empathy, Sense Evil, and P.P.E. Shield.

The Advocate of Dark wears a different headpiece, the *Deshkhet* or 'Red Crown,' a red headdress with a bowl-shaped depression and a stylized cobra protruding forwards from the bowl as if ready to strike. Legend has it that the snake on the Red Crown can spring to life and attack the wearer's enemies. That is not quite true, but it does have the following abilities: +2 to Spell Strength and is impervious to the 'offensive' abilities of the White Crown (i.e. the sensing of emotions and alignment). Through the 'Eyes of the Serpent,' the Advocate of Dark can cast the following spells: See Aura, See the Invisible, Decipher Magic, See Wards and Sense Traps. The 'Gaze of the Serpent' can also put a victim into a 'Trance' as per the fourth level spell, or it can be used to implant a Mental Illusion in the mind of a victim, as per the Super Psionic power of the same name. Additionally, the serpent can be magically animated to snap and hiss, creating an effect as per the 'Fear' spell, but the Advocate will very rarely use these abilities for fear of revealing its secret. Each of the crown's abilities can be performed three times daily.

The Mediator wears the *Hadesh Ma'khet* or 'Double Crown,' a combination of the two Advocates' headwear; the cone of the Hadjet nestled in the bowl of the Deshkhet. The Mediator's Crown is blessed with a permanent *Prayer of Sanctified Vestments*, conferring an Awe Factor of 13 on the wearer. It also provides a bonus of +2 to save vs psionics and magic, is impervious to the effects of both other crowns, and allows the wearer to cast any combination of the following spells three times per day: Tongues, Empathy, See Aura, Charismatic Aura, Purification and Spoil. The Gaze of the Serpent in this case instills the effects of the 'Words of Truth' spell. The serpent of the Double Crown cannot be animated. As holy items, all three crowns also provide the wearers with a bonus of +5% to prayers and other priestly abilities. All are made from a resilient fabric magically resistant to wear and damage and have been handed down from generation to generation.

The Mediator also carries the *Rod of Judgement*. When a decision is made, he traditionally bangs the Rod on the floor to denote

the finality of his judgement. This Ankh-headed wooden staff is not a magical item, but is a treasured heirloom of Khemennu worth a fortune for its historical value alone.

The final piece of ceremonial paraphernalia is the *Khemennu Scepter*, a greater Holy Weapon in the form of a large, ornately decorated, golden mace. It is customarily assigned to the *Mace-Bearer*, who, in his role as protector of the Tribunal and the city, carries the mace before the Tribunal in any processional ceremonies. The title of Mace-Bearer is traditionally held by the incumbent High Priest of Anhur, though there have been occasions where the High Priest has selected a proxy to assume this role for him, usually as a reward for some great victory in defense of the city. The current High Priest of Anhur delights in his duty, proud to take center stage at the head of the most important processions. Though almost never used in combat, the Scepter is a Greater Holy Weapon able to inflict a whopping 4D6+6 damage despite its fragile appearance (double damage to creatures of magic and supernatural beings), and with the powers of Expel Demons, Deevils and Entities, and Radius of Protection. The Scepter does not remain in the Mace-Bearer's possession at all times, but is displayed in the Tribunal's Hall of Judgment until needed for each ceremony.

Members of the Ruling Body

Ashanti Caro, Advocate of Light

Advocate Caro is unusual for two reasons: firstly, she is the youngest priest ever to be voted as Advocate of Light, and secondly, she is a woman. The main reason for her success is her apparent unsuitability to the role. In her previous position as High Priest of Harmakhis, Caro was a good fit, profoundly dedicated to the Gods of Light and to everything that stands for honesty, proper values and moral fortitude. But she was a little blinkered by her unwavering devotion to all that is good, less capable as a speaker and unable to make her point heard during the meetings of the Synod. When the time came to appoint a new Advocate of Light, some of the less principled High Priests of Light saw High Priest Caro as a potential dupe; a weak leader who they could bend to their tasks (even priests of light have human frailties, and as everyone knows, power corrupts!). The man who was to become her replacement as head of the Sect of Harmakhis was eager to see her move on and seal himself a cushy job in the Synod. Others were genuinely impressed by her devotion and welcomed the suggestion, and so the job was hers. In her naivete, she has found herself manipulated a few times, but although no genius, she is not stupid, and is aware that some members of the Synod seem to press her constantly for favors. She has hardened a little, and with the assistance of the Mediator, learned a little more. In fact, she has surprised many of her detractors with her ability as an Advocate; her supreme commitment to the side of Light leads her to argue passionately for every cause, no matter how trivial. What she lacks in skill as a wordsmith she makes up for with persistence and determination!

Quick Stats for Ashanti Caro:

Title: Her Grace, Bishop Ashanti Caro, Advocate of Light, High Priest of the Khemennu Church of Light.
O.C.C.: 7th level Priest of Light.

Race: Human.

Alignment: Principled.

Attributes: I.Q. 12, M.E. 14, M.A. 11, P.S. 10, P.E. 11, P.P. 8, P.B. 13, Spd 8.

Hit Points: 36. **S.D.C.:** 4.

P.P.E.: 54

Bonuses: 3 attacks per melee round, +1 to strike, +2 to parry and dodge, +2 to roll with punch/fall, +2 to pull punch, +2 to damage, Critical Strike on 19-20, snap kick (1D6).

Skills of Note: Speaks Human Western at 98% proficiency, Dwarven and Elven 90% and Gobblely 85%, literate in Western and Elven 80%, Dance 80%, Lore: Religion 80%, Astronomy & Navigation 65%, First Aid 75% and Holistic Medicine 75/65%.

Abilities: All Blessings, Prayer of Strength 62%, Prayer of Communion 63%, Prayer of Intervention 63%, Healing Touch (2D4), Exorcism 49%, Remove Curse 49%, Resurrection 16%, Turn Dead 50%, Penance and Sacrifice.

Spell Knowledge: Tongues, Blinding Flash, Globe of Daylight, Impervious to Fire, Negate Poison/Toxin and Thunderclap. Spell Strength is 13.

Psionics: None.

Magic Items: The Hadjet, or White Crown, described previously. This headgear is the symbol of the office of the Advocate of Light.

Equipment: Normal for a Priest of Light, plus the various trappings appropriate to her station.



Agrii Khaliq, Advocate of Dark

Caro's opposite number, Agrii Khaliq, has come to truly hate her, and dreads each Tribunal meeting. The egotistical Elf sees her as wasting his time with endless repetition and fixating on trifling matters. Many Advocates of Dark come from the Sect of Anubis, which generally commands respect from the other sects and is one of the most popular patron deities of the city. Not Khaliq – he is a Set man, through and through. He *expected* to get this job; only the High Priests of Set are worthy of leading the Church of Taut, and only a High Priest of Ra should lead the other side, not this wretched, goody-goody *girl*. During full meetings of the Synod, Khaliq often (with complete disregard for protocol) directs his arguments directly to the current High Priest of Ra, who he sees as more worthy of respect, and in any case, gives a better argument. The Advocate's arrogance, lack of control and unprofessional outbursts of anger are causing him to lose not just arguments, but the respect of his High Priests. There are many

potential replacements out there, some still lowly priests within his own sect, who would love to see a new Advocate of Dark sitting on the Tribunal, but so far, Khaliq's ruthless maneuvers have kept him in place.

Quick Stats for Agrii Khaliq:

Title: His Grace, Bishop Agrii Khaliq, Advocate of Dark, High Priest of the Khemennu Church of Taut.

O.C.C.: 8th level Priest of Darkness.

Race: Elf.

Alignment: Aberrant.

Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.E. 11, M.A. 9, P.S. 12, P.E. 8, P.P. 15, P.B. 16, Spd 10.

Hit Points: 48. **S.D.C.:** 16.

P.P.E.: 73

Bonuses: 3 attacks per melee round, +1 to strike, +2 to parry and dodge, +2 to roll with punch/fall, +2 to pull punch, +2 to damage, Critical Strike on 19-20, kick attack (2D4), body flip/throw, charm/impress 30%.

Skills of Note: Speaks Elven 98%, Human: Western and Dwarven 95%, literate in Western and Elven 80%, Lore: Religion 85%, Lore: Demons and Monsters 72%, Streetwise 58%, Interrogation 60%, Use and Recognize Poison 52/44%, and W.P. Knife (+3 to strike and parry, +4 to throw).

Abilities: Prayer of Strength of the Damned 72%, Prayer of Communion 72%, Summon Minions of Darkness 66%, Curses 52%, Healing Touch (1D6), Exorcism 56%, Remove Curse 56%, Resurrection 19%, Turn Dead 55%, Animate and Command Dead 72%, Demon Familiar: Khaliq has a Gargoyle familiar named Baggrok whom he chose purely for his intimidating size and appearance. Although the familiar's animal form is that of a large snake, Khaliq insists the Gargoyle stay by his side in its true demonic form as much as possible as a ploy to unnerve his rivals. While this works well among the general populace and low-level clergy, the tactic is less than successful against the more senior priests, as many of them could easily summon Gargoyles of their own if they really wanted to. Baggrok is bored with his mundane duty of standing behind the Advocate looking menacing, and itches for a more active assignment.

Spell Knowledge: Agony, Compulsion, Constrain Being, Control and Enslave Entity, Fiery Touch and Paralysis: Lesser. Spell Strength is 13.

Psionics: None.

Magic Items: The Deshkhet, or Red Crown, described previously. This headgear is the symbol of the office of the Advocate of Dark. Khaliq also has a magical ceremonial dagger with the power of *Foebane* (see **Western Empire™**, page 157). As well as the normal Foebane abilities, the blade can also sense the person with the highest level of P.P.E., enabling Khaliq to select the most lucrative targets for a blood sacrifice!

Equipment: Normal for a Priest of Darkness, plus the various trappings appropriate to his position.

Celezan Dhurmak, Mediator of Khemennu

Between these two opposites sits the Mediator, Celezan Dhurmak. It is thanks to Dhurmak's supreme patience and skill that

anything gets done at all. Both Advocates, and the entire Synod, even those who don't like him, begrudgingly accept that the old man is an excellent Mediator, and are content to have him running the city so that they can concentrate on their own problems or plots. Well respected for years as a High Priest of Thoth, Dhurmak's escalation to Mediator was never in doubt. He is intelligent, calm, and patient; he appears to listen carefully to both sides, and never seems to disregard an opinion – even when he interrupts or cuts a speaker short, it is often to re-word the speaker's point in a more succinct manner, frequently helping them. When he does need to silence a disruptive element he seems able to do so with a mere word, sometimes with nothing more than a raised hand. During the two months he spent in sabbatical in Sekti-Abtu, meeting with the Holy Pontiff, anarchy reigned in the Synod; upon his return, he carefully examined the issues, accurately identified and quietly reprimanded those responsible, and within one meeting had somehow returned order to the Council. He is also well liked by the masses (his public addresses are always short and to the point, but still inspiring; no one wants to stand around for too long in the hot sun listening to holy men drone on and on). In short, the Mediator is a natural, and will be sorely missed when his advancing years catch up with him. Indeed he is so good at what he does that some folk, both in the priesthood and the general public, wonder aloud if he is some sort of supernatural being, or if he truly is influenced directly by the gods themselves.

Quick Stats for Celezan Dhurmak:

Title: His Eminence, Archbishop Celezan Dhurmak, Mediator of the Tribunal of Khemennu and Patriarch of the Khemennu Church of Light and Dark.

O.C.C.: 10th level Scholar Priest of Light (see **Mysteries of Magic™: Book One**, page 42).

Race: Changeling! Perhaps it is not so surprising for a Changeling to have graduated to the post of Mediator. The shape-shifters have an unusually high resistance to stress and a natural affinity unsurpassed by other races, both essential traits for the job. Celezan is gifted in these aspects even for a Changeling. His wiliness has prevented anyone from even suspecting he may be a Changeling, and his talent for persuasiveness has enabled him to talk his way out of any potential problematic circumstances. On more than one occasion, when it seemed that someone may stumble upon the Mediator's secret, Thoth himself has stepped in to provide Celezan with the gift of *'the Genius of Thoth,'* granting him the intelligence and the imagination to figure a way out of the situation. The only problem now is that the Mediator is getting very old. From an observer's point of view he must be pushing a hundred, and if he lives too long, tongues will start wagging. But the Mediator does not want to give up his position – he (rightly) feels he is still the best man for the job and does not want to endanger 'his' city by stepping down if he doesn't need to. If he can't think of an excuse to explain his longevity, he will eventually choose to go on another pilgrimage to Sekti-Abtu or Nisi, and 'go missing' somewhere in the Old Kingdom. Perhaps he will wander for a while, visiting sacred sites and communing with the gods, before eventually returning to Khemennu under a different guise (an *Elf* this time, to avoid the problem again. Why didn't he think of that before?!) to begin his career all over again.

Alignment: Scrupulous.

Attributes: I.Q. 19, M.E. 22, M.A. 24, P.S. 11, P.E. 6, P.P. 12, P.B. 9, Spd 7.

Hit Points: 49. **S.D.C.:** 14.

P.P.E.: 65

Bonuses: 4 attacks per melee round, +1 to strike, +2 to parry and dodge, +4 to roll with punch/fall, +4 to pull punch, +2 to damage, Critical Strike on 19-20, kick attack (2D4), body flip/throw, +4 to save vs psionics, +5 to save vs insanity, trust/intimidate 80%.

Skills of Note: Speaks Elven, Dwarven and Human: Western at 98% proficiency, literate in all three at 95%, Lore: Religion 80%, Public Speaking 92%, Writing 82%, Cryptography 70%, Sing 92%, Math: Advanced 98%, Anthropology 82%, Astronomy & Navigation 92%, History 92%, Imitate Voices and Impersonation 77/57%, Body Building (an attempt to build his weak frame), and others.

Abilities: All Blessings, Prayer of Strength 83%, Prayer of Communion 84%, Prayer of Intervention 84%, Healing Touch (1D4), Turn Dead 65%, Penance and Sacrifice.

Spell Knowledge: Eyes of Thoth, Magic Pigeon, Tongues, Death Trance, Befuddle, Mystic Alarm, Armor of Ithan, Impervious to Poison, See the Invisible and See Wards. Spell Strength is 13.

Psionics: None.

Magic Items: The Hadesh Ma'khet or 'Double Crown,' described previously. This headgear is the symbol of the office of the Mediator. The ceremonial robes of the mediator are actually a 'Cloak of Armor' with A.R. 14, S.D.C. 150. Celezan has also amassed a stash of 'Gullet of Iron' potions. He sometimes uses these prior to eating to allow himself to consume salt or alcohol unharmed. As an aged man, taking a 'tonic to aid digestion' before meals is not considered unusual.

Equipment: The Rod of Judgement (see above), the usual paraphernalia of a Priest of Light and that required for his role as Mediator, plus almost unlimited access to the resources of Khemennu.

Bishop Fassi

His Excellency Huluk Fassi, Metropolitan Bishop of Light and Dark and Chair of the Council of Clergy, is typical of the Metropolitans of the past. He has a mind sharper than a pin, a seemingly bottomless memory for faces, people, past promises and confessions, an easy-going, effortless manner and an inexhaustible capacity for work. The man is a gifted negotiator, able to juggle numerous problems at once and still keep everyone happy. Fassi is a Major Psychic, and his abilities of Resist Fatigue, Speed Reading, Total Recall and others, enable him to burn the candle at both ends while still remaining sharp. Some see him as a scheming manipulator, and perhaps he is, but he holds no real malice towards others, and while he always seems to come out on top, he doesn't *usually* humiliate his opponents without good reason. It is best to let others think they have won too, at least in some small way. Alliances are hard won and useful to retain. It is clear that Fassi has his eyes on the job of Mediator, and many in the Council of Clergy feel that is a role justly deserved. The only snag is that the members of the Synod simply don't like him. His cheerful manner, that stupid smile even in the midst of a heated quarrel, that unashamed sense of superiority; most of the High

Priests can't stand the man, not least because he always seems to be able to beat them in an argument. It is likely that he would make a good Mediator, but Fassi needs to gain some allies in the Synod for that to ever pan out.

Quick Stats for Huluk Fassi:

Title: His Excellency Huluk Fassi, Metropolitan Bishop of Light and Dark and Chair of the Council of Clergy.

O.C.C.: 8th level Priest of Darkness.

Race: Human.

Alignment: Anarchist.

Attributes: I.Q. 18, M.E. 17, M.A. 19, P.S. 9, P.E. 14, P.P. 10, P.B. 12, Spd 13.

Hit Points: 42. **S.D.C.:** 12.

P.P.E.: 67

Bonuses: 3 attacks per melee round, +1 to strike, +2 to parry and dodge, +3 to roll with punch/fall, +2 to pull punch, +2 to damage, Critical Strike on 19-20, kick attack (2D4), body flip/throw, +1 to save vs psionics/insanity, trust/intimidate 55%.

Skills of Note: Speaks Human: Western 98%, Elven 98%, Dwarven 84%, Southern 64% and Gobblely 64%, literate in Western and Elven 84%, Sign Language 84%, Lore: Religion 89%, Lore: Demons and Monsters 76%, Streetwise 62%, Anthropology 64%, Math: Advanced 89%, Interrogation 64%, Detect Ambush 69%, Detect Concealment & Traps 64%, Locate Secret Compartments & Doors 54%, Intelligence 62%, Cryptography 59%, Art 89% and Athletics (a healthy body means a healthy mind).

Abilities: Prayer of Strength of the Damned 72%, Prayer of Communion 72%, Summon Minions of Darkness 66%, Curses 52%, Healing Touch (1D6), Exorcism 56%, Remove Curse 56%, Resurrection 19%, Turn Dead 55%, Animate and Command Dead 72%, Demon Familiar – Fassi has not yet taken a familiar. He currently enjoys the challenge of working alone without relying on a supernatural spy or bodyguard. Furthermore, he suspects that some of the demon familiars throughout the city are not as loyal to their priests as they pretend, secretly making deals and scheming between themselves under the table, and as such, he has chosen to defer this gift for the time being.

Spell Knowledge: Calling, Detect Poison, Mystic Portal, See Aura, See the Invisible and Tongues. Spell Strength is 13.

Psionics: **I.S.P.:** 77. Major Psychic with the powers of Resist Fatigue, Suppress Fear, Empathy, Object Read, Speed Reading and Total Recall.

Magic Items: Fassi has collected a few minor potions and magic fumes of various types to use should the appropriate situation arise. These include Chameleon, Mute, Metamorphosis, Negate Poisons, Gullet of Iron, Superior Resistance, Apparitions and Drive Away Evil Spirits, amongst others.

Equipment: Normal for a Priest of Darkness. Fassi also has a small but well-appointed personal gallery festooned with rare historical works of religious art.

Chancellor Muhasi

The incumbent Chancellor, Yanet Muhasi, differs from his counterpart on the Council of Clergy in that while his job involves a similar amount of juggling responsibilities, keeping various opposing parties happy and trying to please everyone, he just isn't as well cut out for it. Muhasi is a capable admin-

istrator, with good organizational skills, but the sheer weight of work heaped on his table is too much for the beleaguered bureaucrat, and he is starting to crumble under the pressure. Unable or unwilling to delegate much of his work, he seems to take it all on his shoulders, and is visibly stressed out at all times. The job is also putting great strain on his marriage and home life. The sad thing is that he genuinely wants to please everyone, and has potential to do great things if he has the chance. Before promotion to Chancellor, Muhasi excelled in his role as Dean of Public Works, vastly improving huge swaths of city infrastructure. He has an ambitious idea for a huge restructuring of the annual pilgrimage, sectioning off parts of the town and guiding the crowds down pre-ordained, one-way, circular routes to ease congestion, but he simply doesn't have the time to dedicate to his plans. He may try to push his plans forward as best he can, but a miscalculation could prove disastrous for the pilgrimage; there have been many casualties in past years when crowds have grown to unmanageable sizes, hit a dead end and pilgrims were crushed to death in the confusion. If he could find some capable deputies he could trust, it might free him up to make this and other improvements to the city that he needs. If not, he is likely to crack under the pressure and be forced to retire, leaving the post of Chancellor in the hands of one of the mediocre quill-pushers beneath him.

Quick Stats for Yanet Muhasi:

Title: The Most Reverend Yanet Muhasi, Chancellor of Khemen-nu.

O.C.C.: 3rd level Priest of Light, 6th level Scholar/Administrator.

Race: Human.

Alignment: Scrupulous.

Attributes: I.Q. 15, M.E. 12, M.A. 8, P.S. 11, P.E. 12, P.P. 14, P.B. 9, Spd 12.

Hit Points: 39. **S.D.C.:** 5.

P.P.E.: 41

Bonuses: 2 attacks per melee round, +2 to parry and dodge, +2 to roll with punch/fall, +2 to pull punch, Critical Strike on a Natural 20, kick attack (2D4).

Skills of Note: Speaks Human: Western at 98% proficiency, Dwarven and Elven 70%, literate in Elven 55%, Western and Dwarven 75%, Math: Advanced 80%, Archaeology 65%, Masonry 70%, Carpentry 50%, Locate Secret Compartments/Doors 55% and Lore: Geomancy 70%.

Abilities: All Blessings, Prayer of Strength 34%, Prayer of Communion 35%, Prayer of Intervention 35%, Healing Touch (2D4), Exorcism 21%, Remove Curse 21%, Turn Dead 30%, Penance and Sacrifice.

Spell Knowledge: Tongues, Levitation. Spell Strength 12.

Psionics: None.

Magic Items: None.

Equipment: The cutting edge in Dwarven-made stationery, draftsman's tools and surveyor's equipment. He wears his basic, plain priestly vestments whenever he can get away with it, uncomfortable in the ostentatious ceremonial robes and gold chain of office that the Chancellor is supposed to don for formal occasions.

Mutants on the Loose!

“Official” NPCs & adventure source material for *Heroes Unlimited*™. Also suitable for use in *After the Bomb*® and adaptable to other game settings like *Phase World*® or alien realms and alternate Earth dimensions.

Written by Kevin Siembieda

Inspired by the artwork of Nicholas Bradshaw.

Doctor Feral created by Erick Wujcik.

It looks like the notorious **Doctor Feral** is in hot water again. The renowned scientist and brilliant businessman has, in the past, managed to elude countless accusations of wrongdoing and criminal conspiracy. Talking his way out of police custody and always having someone else take the fall. As a result, he has never been charged with a crime, but he may have pressed his luck too far this time.



Who is Doctor Feral?

It is hard to imagine anyone not knowing who Doctor Thaddeus James Feral might be. The man may be reclusive, but he is a world famous scientist and business person renowned in the field of genetics. Doc Feral’s corporate empire spans the globe and has been responsible for hundreds of breakthroughs and patents in medicine and bio-engineering. Over the past decade, however, he and his largest company, **BIO-Spawn Inc.**, has been routinely in the news and under investigation. Across six countries, BIO-Spawn has been implicated in criminal activities involving charges of kidnaping, wrongful imprisonment, human-trafficking, inhumane treatment of animals, torture, conspiracy, and the list goes on and on.

In each case, Doctor Feral has been cleared of all charges. The evildoers proven time and again to be “rogue employees” convicted and sentenced to long prison terms. Among the crimes are 163 counts of unethical and criminal acts involving unlawful experimentation on animals as well as human cloning, combin-

ing human and animal DNA to create mutant hybrids, and genetic manipulation to induce superhuman capabilities in animal and human test subjects. Though it cannot be proven, there some scientists and authorities who speculate that 70% of all mutant animals on the loose have been created using the technology of BIO-Spawn. And now, some suspect Doctor Feral has turned his attention to creating supermen on the black market.

Despite countless accusations to the contrary, investigators have never uncovered a shred of evidence linking Doctor Feral directly to any criminal wrongdoing. In each case, the people responsible were proven to be *rogue employees* bought off by a villainous third party.

Two years ago, new claims and charges were directed against BIO-Spawn for animal abuse and illegal genetic experimentation. And again, another group of rogue employees took the fall. According to public records, a cadre of highly placed employees and an officer of the BIO-Spawn company were selling bio-tech secrets to the highest bidder. They were also convicted of creating deadly mutant animals and monsters for underground criminal organizations looking to build themselves an army of super beings. These criminals purchased monstrous mutant animals to serve as guard animals, enforcers and for underworld blood sport – gladiatorial combat and fights to the death for the purpose of gambling. A similar operation was shut down in Thailand two months earlier. Though suspicion loomed over the BIO-Spawn facility in that country, there were no charges, not even an investigation for lack of sufficient evidence to implicate the company or the good doctor.

Over the last 12 years, more than 50 so-called rogue employees at various research facilities have been convicted of stealing and selling BIO-Spawn technology to well-funded super-villains and criminal organizations. Others have been involved in trying to establish so-called “super-soldier factories” where human “volunteers” were subjected to all manner of illegal and inhumane experimentation in an effort to give them super abilities. Such experimentation often led to madness and death, with 29 *murder* convictions attributed to just one such group. The trials of many other so-called rogue employee criminal operations are pending. Even they are considered just the tip of a very large, ugly, iceberg. Since human test subjects are always necessary for “super-soldier” experimentation, additional charges of human-trafficking, mutant animals trafficking, use of dangerous and illegal drugs, and numerous other crimes also apply. This broad spectrum of criminal activity means almost any federal agency from Homeland Security to the DEA, ATF, FBI and others have jurisdiction to investigate when they are not tripping over each other.

There is a tiny movement forming to bring Doctor Thaddeus J. Feral up on charges for crimes against humanity, but no gov-

ernment has expressed any willingness to do so. Moreover, since the Doctor has always been exonerated of any wrongdoing, he portrays himself as the hapless victim of a growing criminal underground led by madmen and super-villains.

Doc Feral explains it this way, and the public is buying it:

“When you are the cutting edge of bio-engineering such as I am, it creates a repugnant market for its unethical application. Sadly, there seems no end to the powerful criminal organizations, rival corporations and even leaders of entire countries who are willing to do anything to gain access to my secrets and technology, regardless of cost or legality. It is tragic, but such ruthless brutes have no hesitation to use my miracles of genetic engineering in the most heinous of ways. Subverting our morals and ethics for their own personal gain.

“Basic human rights and dignity, let alone the laws of man and god, mean nothing to them. Such brutes pay handsomely for the advancements in genetic engineering that I am pioneering. It saddens me to say it, but there always seems to be somebody willing to accept their blood money and sell me out, perverting my scientific breakthroughs and pioneering technologies. I do what I can to secure our secrets. I pay my people well, but when criminal kingpins and rogue nations offer tens of millions, sometimes hundreds of millions of dollars, the temptation is too great, and I ... all of us ... are betrayed. It is a terrible thing. Terrible.”

There are those among the police and the alphabet soup of federal agencies who have their suspicions about Doctor Feral, but are unable to get anything on him. This has led some to calling him the “Teflon Mad Doctor,” because nothing criminal sticks to him. This, of course, is all part of Doctor Feral’s plan.

In public light he is the paragon of virtue and morality. For the overwhelming percentage of employees who work in Doctor Feral’s corporate empire, he is regarded as an eccentric, reclusive wunderkind. A genius and humanitarian to be revered and respected. None of these employees are involved in anything unethical or criminal. If they do see something suspicious or a violation of the law, they would almost certainly report it to their superiors within the company. To them, Doctor Feral is the Einstein of genetic engineering who keeps himself sequestered away creating medical miracles that improve and save lives. They have no doubt they are part of an illustrious institution that will carry humanity to new heights in the next century.

There are some seedy and outrageous rumors among certain segments of the company as well as on the Internet. Anecdotal stories and claims that suggest the mysterious Doctor Feral might be more mad scientist than saint. Rumors about horrific experiments and the “bending” or “skirting” of the law, especially in other countries, have circulated within the BIO-Spawn corporation, itself, as well as in the scientific community and criminal underworld for years.

Most people, especially the Doctor’s loyal employees, disregard these rumors as pure fantasy and lies made up by jealous competitors, crackpots and technophobes who fear genetic engineering and scientific advancement. Indeed, stories of experimentation upon imprisoned humans stolen off the streets, growing animals into new humanoid life forms, cloning, experiments to create superhumans, and killing untold dozens of victims (some say hundreds!) in the process, *is crazy*. The stuff of science fiction and comic books. No world famous, Noble Prize winning scientist like Doctor Feral, or a mega-corporation like BIO-Spawn, would risk losing everything on such insane research. Any person

engaged in such torturous experiments would be a monster on the level of Doctor Mengele or the fictional Victor Frankenstein. Preposterous. Forget those ridiculous rumors and get back to work making the world a better place. End of story.

Of course, there are those who know better. They see and hear things that suggest a dark side to the good doctor and his many benevolent, medical labs and research companies. Most of them turn a blind eye and keep mum about the improprieties they might catch wind of in order to preserve their high-paying jobs and rich lifestyles. They justify their complicit silence with any number of convenient rationalizations: “Every company takes shortcuts and bends the rules sometimes,” they tell themselves. “We (collectively) are doing more good than harm. We cure disease, save lives!” “I don’t really know what’s going on. It’s probably fine. No reason to stick my nose in matters that don’t involve me.” And for others there is blind faith: “Doctor Feral would never allow anything so terrible. It’s all lies.” Those who ask too many questions or do a little investigating on their own find themselves unemployed or mired in scandal, reinforcing the “unofficial” policy of staying focused on your work and keeping your concerns to yourself.

Among those who know the terrible truth, their silence and complicity often comes down to a matter of misguided scientific advancement, money, power or blackmail.

On the edges of fringe science at the BIO-Spawn corporation, there are scientists and support staff involved in questionable experimentation and illegal operations because they believe someone has to explore these areas of science. They do it out of misguided idealism and reverence to their deific leader. Doctor Feral has a keen eye for recognizing zealots who worship him as a god and are willing to do anything for him. Including terrible, unimaginable things and taking responsibility for his crimes. Such cult-like fanatics are proud to take the blame so Doc Feral can secretly continue his groundbreaking work.

For others, it is a chance to achieve the impossible. They hold in their hands the power over life and death, and the ability to create supermen. Somehow, the importance of their work makes the risk and terrible consequences all worthwhile. For some, this may include narcissistic bragging rights to claim authorship for what has been accomplished, right or wrong. It is their genius, not Doctor Feral, that is responsible. In some instances, they may not even realize that it was Doctor Feral funding their secret operation and pulling the strings from the shadows all along.

For the majority of those working in the shadows, it is all about money. A king’s ransom. Loyalty and silence bought and paid for by Doctor Feral. Like the Mafia, Doctor Feral repays continuing loyalty with a promise that the fall guy will have a good job when he gets out of prison (though probably not with one of Feral’s public companies). Moreover, Doctor Feral’s loyal disciples can count on their loved ones being well taken care of while they are in prison (or dead). Thus, what may seem like a generous act of kindness by Doctor Feral, like sending an employee’s children to the best universities, or some other act of benevolence, may actually be a payoff on a promise to cover the Doctor’s own crimes.

An unfortunate handful get in over their heads and find themselves in too deep to get out. These may be desperate people who agree to horrible things to get themselves out of trouble or to save a loved one. The seemingly compassionate Doctor Feral may personally fund an expensive medical treatment or pull

strings to get an employee's loved one into pre-trials for a new medicine or experimental procedure, but secretly, the favor is done on the condition that the employee does a favor for him first. And Doc Feral always collects on debts owed to him. Others involved in illegal research are blackmailed to cover up the company's wrongdoing or take the blame in order to avoid far greater consequences, or to keep their family safe. Doctor Feral is nothing if not a very persuasive man.

Among his shadier associates, it is a very different story. They know the rumors are all true and that Doctor Feral is a modern Doctor Frankenstein. They stay silent because they are complicit in the illegal activity, whether it a crime boss bankrolling the research, or one of his crew working at the illegal lab or protecting the operation. A masterful planner who envisions the big picture, Doc Feral makes certain he is never directly linked to any criminal activity or wrongdoing. There is always a fall guy to take the blame for him. Always.

And so it is that the mad doctor is able to continue his extreme and illegal genetic experimentation upon unwilling subjects, unimpeded by the law or any government on Earth.

Doctor Feral's own motives are much more difficult to pin down. He does not seem interested in power, he is already famous and hides from it, staying out of the public eye and preferring to work. He doesn't need the money, though he is happy to take the millions and billions of dollars regularly offered to him. There is always a crime lord or leader of a rogue nation ready to give him blood money and a free hand at "his work." And a limitless number of human "test subjects" upon which to conduct his hellish experiments. Life, other than their own, has little value to any of these ruthless clients. They don't care who or how many suffer at the hands of Doc Feral's experiments. All they want are supermen or monsters to serve them and grow their respective empires, whether it be through criminal enterprise or war and conquest.

Such underworld laboratory facilities are often located in foreign countries where corrupt government officials don't ask questions when paid the right price. These underground operations are likely not to have any direct connection to Doc Feral or the BIO-Spawn Corporation either, other than some "rogue" personnel and "stolen" technology. That said, Doctor Feral and his underworld clients can find plenty of secluded places to do their dirty work anywhere in the world, including the United States and other developed countries. In fact, crime lords often provide their own secret lab where Doctor Feral's disciples and henchmen go about their work mutating animals and experimenting upon human beings.

Whether Doctor Feral is a sociopath, a mad man, or ambitious without limit, is anyone's guess. In some circles it is whispered that he is, indeed, a mad scientist with a god complex about his work. A man who believes he is above the law and that no one has the right to place restrictions upon him. He seems driven by his thirst for knowledge and a psychotic need to continually push the envelope beyond accepted norms. Morality, cruelty, and criminality no longer seem to matter to Doctor Feral. He is obsessed with his work even if his ideas and practices are outlawed and cruel. His current obsession is giving super abilities to his mutant animal creations and to ordinary humans, even if he is creating them for criminal organizations, rogue nations and super-villains who don't care about who gets hurt in the process.

In the end, Doctor Feral's motivation to engage in these ruthless, cold-hearted bio-genetic experiments is anyone's guess. It

all suggests Doctor Feral is, or has become, a psychopath lacking true empathy for fellow human beings and may be losing touch with reality. If that is the case, he pretends to be kind and compassionate, and uses his understanding of human emotions as a tool to manipulate people like a master chess player to do his bidding. It also means the extreme measures he is willing to take and the level of danger could be escalating beyond reason, and beyond his control.

Doctor Feral Stats

Alignment: Doctor Feral may have been Scrupulous long ago, but today he is *Aberrant evil*. He is a deluded, self-indulgent scientist with a god complex and a twisted sense of loyalty and responsibility to his labor force and underlings. As a result, he watches out for their welfare, offers excellent benefits and top pay. He has his own twisted moral code and never breaks a promise or an agreement. Also see *Age Note* and *Disposition* for more insight to his character.

Attributes: I.Q. 28, M.E. 22, M.A. 18, P.S. 20, P.P. 12, P.E. 9 (revitalized due to the youth serum, was 6), P.B. 13, and Spd 16.

Armor: Generally none, but he has access to the resources of his mega-corporation and can acquire any conventional or experimental body armor and weapons if he really needs or wants them. When making any public appearance or when entering a dangerous situation, Doc Feral often wears a light, bulletproof vest under his lab coat or jacket (A.R. 16, 60 S.D.C.).

Age: 72, though he seems to have the energy of a man half his age and looks to be in his fifties. Even his hair seems fuller and darker in recent years (presumed to be hair plugs and dyed).

Note: Rumor has it that he has genetically engineered a secret Fountain of Youth serum that reverses the aging process to a significant degree. He keeps the serum for himself and has been taking it at regular intervals for at least a decade. Might this also explain Doctor Feral's increasingly ruthless and malevolent behavior? Could his youth serum have caused chemical changes that have made him psychotic and evil?

Height: 6 foot, 6 inches (2 m). **Weight:** 160 pounds (72 kg).

Hit Points: 68. **S.D.C.:** 15.

Disposition: Reserved, refined and utterly sophisticated. He NEVER stoops to insults or rude remarks, and is unfailingly polite even to victims he's about to subject to torture or vivisection.

This mad scientist is a genius who understands all the inner workings of genetic change. He is a study in contradiction, however, as he does not tolerate bullying or racial or sexual discrimination in any of his businesses, he condemns dictatorships and racist behavior, and he is generous to his friends, employees, educational institutions and the poor. On the other hand, he can be ruthless and cruel, subjecting his "test subjects" – both humans and animals – to agonizing experimentation, drug studies, radiation, imprisonment, torture and genetic manipulation to mutate and transform them into "superior beings." More and more he seems to live by his own rules, and sees nothing wrong with "using" wicked men (i.e. criminals and super-villains) to further his work and to engage in field studies (i.e. study his mutant and superhuman creations in action as heroes and villains). He has never killed anyone nor ordered anyone to be murdered or physically harmed. Of course, "volunteer" test subjects sometimes

die, especially in cutting edge science. That includes people as well as countless lab animals and mutant animal subjects. And he cannot control the actions of some of his less civilized underworld associates.

Doctor Feral is completely contemptuous of any mutant animal who tries to act like an independent being. To him, all animals can be divided into two categories: useful tools/servants and candidates for experimentation and vivisections. He is fully aware of the existence of mutant animals (and mutant humans), and is always interested in acquiring them to further his knowledge, especially if the animal is not one of his creations.

He always has several mutated animal servants who are forced to remain loyal via control collars capable of inflicting pain or death. The collars also double as communication and tracking devices, but all animal test subjects are also implanted with a tracking and identification chip; some of the human test subjects too. No matter how intelligent and human-like his mutant animals may become, he still thinks of them as animals, not people, and therefore they are his “property” and without rights. He doesn’t mean to be cruel or dismissive, it’s just that he sees animals as *expendable laboratory tools* for the advancement of science and humankind.

Experience Level: 15th level scientist specializing in biology, medicine and genetic engineering and manipulation.

Skills or Note: All medical, chemistry, science, radiation technology, and genetics skills at 98%, as well as Basic Electronics, Basic Mechanics, Computer Operation, Fencing, several languages (Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Greek, Hindi, Italian, Latin, Japanese, and Spanish), Pilot: Automobiles, Pilot: Aircraft, Pilot: Jets, all at 98%. He an amateur photographer (80%).

Super Abilities: None. He was born a genius with a high I.Q. and Mental Endurance. He is convinced the human genome contains all the secrets of life, and that unlocking those secrets should enable him to create designer supermen and help humanity jump ahead on the evolutionary scale by 200 million years. He is confident that some day he will perfect a process in which parents can pick all the attributes of their child from intelligence and eye color to an array of super abilities. That is his current agenda.

Psionics: None, however, psychic abilities fascinate him, and he has made a promise to himself to study them in the future. He has already decided that psionic powers are hidden in the DNA of humans and some higher animal life forms, including canines, felines and horses. Personally, Doctor Feral finds the power of the mind to be unsettling, which is why he has avoided research in that area.

Attacks per Melee: Five.

Bonuses: +6 on Perception Rolls involving animals, mutation, super abilities, all things related to genetics and genetic abnormality, and acts of duplicity and treachery. +2 to strike, parry, and dodge, +2 to pull punch, +2 to roll with impact and +3 to save vs Horror Factor and mind control; +5 to strike, +7 to parry with foils and rapier-style swords; +4 to strike with handguns.

Vulnerabilities: Certainly his ego and god complex have the potential for getting him in trouble by overreaching and becoming overconfident. So far, however, Doctor Feral’s ability to see the big picture and plan for every contingency has made

him untouchable. That may change if the youth serum he takes is making him more aggressive and a bit psychotic.

Favorite Weapons: His mutant creations are his favorite tools and weapons. He uses them well and though there is the collar to keep them under his control, two-thirds are completely submissive to him, as they regard him as their wise and well-intentioned father to be obeyed and protected. The remaining third fear Doctor Feral, but even most of them don’t want him dead, they just want to escape, and will do so at the first opportunity.

Though skilled in fencing and target shooting, these weapons are for sport and a last resort in self-defense. The doctor carries a snub-nosed .32 caliber revolver on him at all times (3D6 S.D.C. damage per shot), and he has a permit to carry a concealed weapon.

Equipment and Resources: A billionaire many times over, with influence with heads of state, heads of industry and the criminal underworld, Doctor Feral can lay his hands on just about anything he could want, including contraband, stolen drugs and equipment, and stolen prototypes.

The Escape

Ever since heroes with super abilities came on the scene, human augmentation has become the rage. Superhuman heroes and villains are popping up with increasing frequency. The exploits of some are recounted and extrapolated upon in unofficial TV shows, movies and comic books. Others are frequent news topics, and the tabloids are calling the “superhero phenomena” a new level of celebrity. Some of these super beings use drugs, some bionics and robotics, or mechanical exoskeletons (power armor) and some claim to wield magic. By far, the most sought after and dangerous means making super beings has been illegal, underground, genetic engineering operations to create mutants and super-soldiers.

Doctor Feral is the self-proclaimed master of such dark science and has several “off the books research operations,” as he calls them, going on across the country, a few funded by criminal enterprises. Ironically, it was at one of Doctor Feral’s older off-site locations in Michigan where things went wrong right in front of him.

The mad doctor had created a blended mutant animal that combined the characteristics of *rhinoceros unicornis* – the Indian Rhinoceros – and other animals, along with some human DNA. The intent was to create a strong, armored creature that could function as a front-line infantry soldier or underworld enforcer. In short, a humanoid bulldozer with bio-regenerative powers.

The actual end results was a bastardized version with some unexpected results. Intriguing, but ultimately, a terminal failure.

The nine surviving subjects are all identical clones from the same test group. All with the same problems.

1. They view themselves as members of a tight-knit troop, highly protective of one another.

2. All exhibited extreme aggression. They were fine when left with each other, but became hostile when approached by anyone else or when separated.

3. Rather than instill them with regenerative healing powers, each possesses the super ability **Multiple Beings/Selves**. Moreover, despite their captivity and lack of experience, each of the



nine can create nine copies of himself. When together (and they hate being separated), that's 81 angry, human rhinoceros! Earning them the name, the Swarm.

Their souped-up control collars do not work well through their thick, armored flesh and the multiple copies do not, of course, have a collar when they appear. The first thing the doppelgangers do is tear the collar off their originator, making them an aggressive, uncontrolled mob. A mob that wants out. An angry mob ready to tear down whatever is in their way to escape and run free. And that's exactly what happened.

Somehow, one of the Swarm got loose and multiplied. The nine of them broke free several of the others, and they too multiplied and promptly went on a rampage, smashing and destroying everything in their path. The handful of guards and mutant animals present who were loyal to Doctor Feral quickly fell. As did the automated security system. None of them was any match for the Swarm. Luckily, these angry berserkers are satisfied with pounding people into submission or unconsciousness, so nobody was killed. As for Doctor Feral, he and his two top assistants managed to make it into a hidden safe room. During the havoc, the Swarm managed to released many other "test subjects" that also made a run for freedom. Some were animals, some mutant animals, some were super-powered test subjects, and a few were what can only be described as monsters.

Only two mutants stayed behind to put out fires started in the mayhem and to protect innocent bystanders as the Swarm and other panicked test subjects poured out of the building. (See Devil Worm and Hopper, elsewhere). By the time the police, SWAT and Fire and Rescue arrived, the menagerie of mutants had scattered across the derelict landscape of Detroit's waterfront factory and warehouse district. The Swarm reduced back into nine and vanished into the sewers.

Hopper and Devil Worm stayed behind to comfort people and greeted police, all smiles. They explained how the creator, Doctor Feral, was trying to make super-heroes for the betterment of the world, but some of the experiments went wrong. The pair warned the wary authorities about the Swarm and other mutants and madmen unleashed by accident, and that Doctor Feral had been present but they lost track of him during the melee. Doc Feral's henchmen beaten down by the Swarm were taken into custody for questioning as people of interest. The police were the new swarm as they searched the building, taking photos and video and items as evidence.

Hopper and Devil Worm gave numerous statements to police and the press. The authorities were not happy with them speaking with the press, but it was impossible to stop them when Hopper, apparently a humanoid grasshopper, excitedly leaped over them to address the gathering media, and nobody was going to mess with Devil Worm, whose nature defied description. The charismatic Hopper was happy to leap into the role of "super-hero," and rattled on with child-like glee about how he and his partner, Devil Worm were pleased to save lives. After all, they were born to be heroes. Devil Worm mostly grinned with his terrifying smile, did a lot of nodding and confirmed Hopper's story with, "Yes, that's correct." "I did." "He did." "We are here to protect you." If the weird looking erstwhile heroes were not so affable and genuinely cheerful and friendly, the police might have dragged them away for questioning sooner, but the inhuman and enthusiastic dynamic duo were difficult to contain. It also helped that witnesses were quick to confirm the two heroes did their best to protect people

and try to herd the Swarm away from bystanders and from causing more damage.

The authorities were able to usher Hopper and Devil Worm into a paddy wagon for further questioning downtown, when the limelight and cameras turned to Doctor Feral being led out of the building in handcuffs. The famed scientist appeared unfazed, but said nothing as the police quickly took him into a squad car and sped away.

"Can you confirm that was Doctor Feral?"

"Is he a suspect?"

"Is he under arrest? Why was he in handcuffs?"

"Was that his assistant, Evelyn Mead?"

"Was Doctor Feral responsible for this?"

"What can you tell us?"

The police declined to answer questions, largely because they didn't have any answers yet. The officer in charge on the scene told them there would be an official statement later, but that didn't stop the barrage of questions.

"Was this a BIO-Spawn facility?"

"Is Doctor Feral being charged?"

"What are the charges?"

"Is this a criminal operation?"

"Human trafficking?"

"Drug house?"

"Is the mob involved?"

"What about the monsters that escaped?"

"Is the public in danger? Who should they call?"

"Will there be a reward for their capture?"

"Will there be a tip line?"

* * *

Hopper and Devil Worm proudly gave their statements and told the authorities everything they knew in video interviews together and separately. They told them about the mutants and super beings and goings-on that they knew about, but that they had been restricted to their room and did not know everything that had transpired over the last four years. They also agreed to testify against Doctor Feral at trial.

Having no money and no place to go, the police told the pair they would hold them in protective custody – inside a prison cell. Separate prison cells. They were told that a team of special, federal agents were flying in and they would take over the investigation. Until then, they were to be kept in hiding and safe. Hopper assured them they could take care of themselves, but certainly could use a place to stay. In the meanwhile, he offered them their help to "bust other perps" and "take down any super-baddies that needed taking down." The police kindly turned down his offer and wanted to escort them to their "rooms."

The trusting Hopper might have agreed, but Devil Worm would not have it. The police could not know Devil Worm possessed a small array of psionic abilities that let him know what they were feeling and thinking. He reached out to Hopper with a telepathic warning.

"Hopper, they fear us and mean to lock us up. The feds will take us away to some secret place. Probably experiment on us."

"That can't be right," Hopper said aloud. "We're heroes here to help."

"Yes, we know," said a police officer who thought the grasshopper man was speaking to him.

Devil Worm continued to speak to his friend via Telepathy. *"Some see us as heroes, but ... but most don't know what to make of us. They fear us. Think we're freaks. Dangerous monsters. They'll be happy when we're the feds' problem."*

Hopper hung his head low, trying to think about what to do while fighting his disappointment.

"Don't be sad, Cal." That was Hopper's real name. *"We are heroes. They just don't know it yet."*

"Yeah, I guess. How do we prove it?" said Cal in his quiet voice. He had never come to terms with telepathic communication and always answered out loud, despite the fact that his buddy could read his surface thoughts.

"We find Swarm and the bad ones who got away. Fight super-villains and prove we are the good guys!"

"I don't think we can just walk out, Big D. Won't they try to stop us?"

"Yes. They will try, but you know they can't. Getaway for us is easy."

"But we would be vigilantes, then. Outlaws!"

"Yes, like Batman or Spider-Man. They're still good guys. Cal, I can't be locked up. And they will keep us apart. I hear this in their thoughts. Cal, I can't be locked up again. And not alone."

Hopper thought for a minute. Devil Worm smiled, knowing his answer before Cal spoke it.

"Like Spider-Man, then. The Dark Knight is too brooding for my tastes. Though I could see you as the Batman. I mean, you have bat wings. Only that would make me Robin, and I don't want to be Robin. Well, I could be Nightwing, he's not bad."

"Cal. They're comic book characters. We're real. We be who we are. We go prove to all we're good guys and cooler than any of them others."

"Yep. Um, let's try not to hurt anybody too bad. These are our brothers in arms, remember?"

"I try my best. Do we fight our way to door or me punch through wall to make new door?"

"Wall. They won't expect it. We don't have to fight anyone and it's a dramatic exit."

"Hello, wall. Goodbye, police!" bellowed Devil Worm as he plowed through part of a third story window and a hunk of the wall.

"Sorry for the damage," apologized Hopper as he bounced around trying to explain what was happening to the police. "The Big Guy can't be locked up, so we gotta go. Don't worry, we're on your side and we'll be fighting the bad guys!"

A moment later, he leaped through the hole made by his partner and flew off into the sky before most of the peace officers had drawn their weapons. All of them too flummoxed to take a shot. They all knew they had not seen the last of Hopper and Devil Worm.

* * *

At the press conference, the authorities explained the events of that morning as best they could. All available forces were hunting down the dangerous mutants and wild animals that had escaped from an illegal genetics chop shop. There was a tip line to report sightings, and people were warned not to take matters into their own hands.

The Chief of Police explained that the creatures known as Devil Worm and Hopper do not seem to be hostile, but that

enough was not known about them and to call the police when sighted. Both were fugitives who had escaped police custody and were wanted for further questioning. That was followed by the police chief's usual spiel about vigilantes and how anyone who took the law into their own hands was, in fact, breaking the law and behaving in a reckless and dangerous manner.

Then, to the surprise of the crowd, Doc Feral was directed to step forward. Two FBI agents at his side — for his protection.

"The illustrious Doctor Feral," continued the Police Chief, "has been cleared of any wrongdoing. He was, in fact, as much a victim as anyone, and we are glad he is safe and unharmed. The Doctor has been helping us in this investigation, and I am proud to be the first to announce that he will be joining a federal task force to help bring an end to the unlawful use of genetic engineering to create super beings and genetic monstrosities. Doctor ..."

Doctor Feral approached the podium with the hint of a slight grin.

"Detroiters and everyone who lives in fear of superhuman criminals, everywhere. It is terrible that my cutting edge breakthroughs in genetic engineering are used by people of reprehensible character to create augmented humans and animal mutations for criminal enterprises.

"I suppose it was foolish of me to investigate, on my own, the rumor of such an illegal genetics laboratory here in your fine city. Accompanied only by my head of security and my assistant, we ran into more than we could handle. It was a matter best left to the police, and I hope you learn from my error in judgement.

"As you know, when I built my latest and largest BIO-Spawn compound here in your city of renaissance, it was with the purpose of creating jobs and rebuilding this great city. Detroit has always been a city of the future. Now, because of criminal and self-serving thugs, Detroit has joined the fraternity of bio-genetic terrorism. Thankfully, fate, and the quick work of your police force, this house of horrors was shut down and those responsible arrested before they could do more damage.

"This latest incident is one reason I have agreed to join the government's war on genetic terrorism. I will be spearheading a new government program to stop these bio-tech crimes and to keep the American people safe from inhuman, genetically engineered supermen. It is my goal that this program is so successful that it becomes the model for governments and authorities around the world. God bless and prosper."

Cue applause.

Adventure Hooks

Game Masters, use the runaway mutants from Doc Feral's secret facility to spice up your game, provide missions for the player characters, and cause them unexpected trouble or complications. While the police are trying to play down the danger, this is a serious situation. Nobody, except Doctor Feral who feigns innocence and no knowledge of the creatures that have escaped, and his henchmen in custody who are not talking, know exactly what's been set loose in the city. The police are working on hunting down and capturing or destroying these freakish creatures, but they are in over their heads when it comes to creatures and mad men with super abilities. As a result, a call has been sent out to known heroes in the region to help them capture them. Moreover, mutants and creatures that fall into the wrong hands can be

used as much more dangerous threats to the community and sent against law enforcement.

Mutant animals on the loose. Doctor Feral appears to have skated free again, but his careless handiwork has left people in danger. Dozens of lab animals have escaped. Some of them genetically altered or exposed to other types of experimentation that could make them more dangerous than ordinary animals of their species. This could be a chimpanzee that can read, picks locks and breaks into homes in search of fresh fruit and video games to play, or a rat with a genius I.Q. and the ability to speak who becomes a criminal mastermind, to a dog that can turn invisible or a cat that swims like a fish or possesses a minor super ability. Some can be silly nuisances while others are dangerous, predators that are hunting people as prey. Game Masters, cut loose and use your imaginations.

Monsters. A few (2-4 or 6-8) are dangerous monsters. How dangerous and what powers (animal or super) they may possess is left for you. In both the case of mutant animals and monsters running wild, the creature could be an isolated threat, like a puma or bear in the city, or a creature with a high animal intelligence or low human I.Q., that may be sought after by gangs, criminals or super-villains to use as a guard or attack animal, pet, or in blood sports like dog fighting and worse. A “monster” is likely to be at least man-size, but could be bigger. It may function on instinct or intelligence. It may only seek to live free or it may hate humans or become the attack animal of a bad guy. The point is, these mutations are dangerous. Again, use your discretion and have fun.

Troubled Mutants. Intelligent mutant animals of good or selfish alignments do not want to be locked up in a lab again, or worse, exterminated. They may not be evil, but they are hunted fugitives made all the more desperate because they are not human. This requires them to steal clothing, food and money to survive. Some may try to hide and scavenge to survive while others may continually wander until they can find a safe place to hole up. They only steal what they need, and will try to get work if possible. Unfortunately, if they look inhuman, and most do, the only work they can get are from people willing to break the law and outright criminals. Which means they are being hunted by the authorities, good guys and bad guys. Good aligned mutant animals with powers or fighting abilities are likely to use their powers against bad guys and even to help or rescue the very people hunting them. **Note:** If *Hopper and Devil Worm* find any such mutant, they are sympathetic to their plight and may try to recruit them to their team or convince them to become vigilante heroes themselves.

Vengeful Mutants. Some of the escaped, intelligent mutant animals and humans imbued with super powers under cruel and probably unwanted conditions, want revenge against Doctor Feral, and by extension, anyone associated at any of his companions. While some may try to target only those they have decided must have know or been involved, others attack, beat, rob and kill innocent employees of BIO-Spawn. Likewise, when they steal, they target BIO-Spawn Corporation facilities, vehicles, equipment, etc. Their vengeance is may include acts of vandalism, arson, and destruction of BIO-Spawn property. Blinded by hate and vengeance, such mutants may include what they believe are corrupt law enforcement and perhaps the US government for protecting the evil Doctor Feral. Their suffering and anger has driven them to do terrible things, including fighting, and if necessary, killing anyone who gets in their way. Those who may have start-

ed off with a good alignment have seen their alignment change to Anarchist, and more likely Miscreant, Diabolic and Aberrant evil alignments. The worst have become murderous monsters obsessed with revenge. **Note:** If *Hopper and Devil Worm* encounter such a mutant, they are sympathetic to their plight and try to talk them into stopping their wicked ways and turn themselves in to the authorities. If the mutant(s) refuse, the two heroes fight to stop them. They try to capture and turn the villains over to the authorities, but Devil Worm will slay them if left with no other choice.

Evil Mutants. Evil, intelligent mutant animals and super humans are bad to the bone, evil aligned and likely to become a new villain in town or join a villainous group. The smarter the mutant, the more likely he is to join a group or establishes a group with himself in a position of power. These guys are trouble.

Madmen. At least a couple of the escapees are, well, crazy. That makes them unpredictable and dangerous. How dangerous depends on the Game Master. It could mean the mutant is a nice fellow until something sets him off, or he/it could be a murderous maniac with little or no empathy for the people he kills or the things he does.

The Swarm. The nine mutants that comprise the Swarm is a unique case. They are not savage animals, they only behave like it when they go on a rampage, which is easy enough to provoke. They are not particularly smart either. The members of the Swarm have low human intelligence as well as animal instincts. Instincts that tell them to run free and fight anyone who threatens them. They are highly aggressive and quick to violence, but they also know the limits of their powers and use them. For example, one of the Swarm might detonate an explosive to hurt people or damage an area, knowing full well that it can survive the blast due to its natural body armor. Otherwise, they function like violent *Troubled Mutants*, stealing and taking what they need to survive. They are most dangerous because of their numbers and penchant for extreme violence. All these nine want is to be left alone and to find a place where they can live free. Gullible and dull-witted, a tricky super-villain or crime boss may be able to convince the Swarm he can protect them and help them find peace and solitude, provided they help him on a regular basis. Such a clever friend and leader can easily manipulate the Swarm. **Note:** *Hopper and Devil Worm* are likely to have several encounters with one or more members of the Swarm. They know these mutants will not listen to reason and must be taken down by force.

Hopper and Devil Worm. These heroes are in the same boat as *Troubled Mutants*: fugitives without resources on the run from the law. Their solution is to steal only from the bad guys – drug dealers, crooks, and organized crime groups – after they take them down and before they make an anonymous call to the police. Otherwise, they are dedicated crime fighters who are quick to fight muggers, gangbangers, drug dealers, drug lords, human traffickers, and criminals of all kind. They have yet to battle any super humans yet, but that seems inevitable. Their grass-roots war on crime in the neighborhoods is attracting the attention of crime bosses who are feeling the sting of their efforts. It is only a matter of time before a crime boss calls in some super-thugs to take down these two vigilantes.

The local police and FBI come to recognize the two as “good guys,” but they are vigilantes breaking the law. As a result, law enforcement continue to hunt the two vigilantes, but do so in a half-hearted manner and some turn a blind eye and let them get away. Doctor Feral never had much use for these two jovial boy

scouts and has no further interest in them. In fact, he has “officially” stated that he does not believe they were created at the lab or with his technology, and might be aliens or mutants of another variety. Their claims that he created them are, of course, lies or delusions.

Doctor Feral. The good Doctor has a lot of irons in the fire, so losing one secret lab is annoying, but not a big deal. He just moves on. The lab in Detroit was a favorite, and he might have established a new one, except he has a new opportunity to keep him busy. Free rein to create super-soldiers for the government of the United States of America. It is time to fight fire with fire. And if anyone can find a way to empower ordinary people with super abilities or grow a new era of superhuman defenders from a petri dish, it is Doctor Feral.

The mad scientist can hardly believe his good fortune. He was sure he was finally caught dead to rights. His fingerprints all over the secret lab, and dozens of test subjects on the loose and able to testify against him. Sloppy. Instead, the government used the undisclosed evidence to leverage Doctor Feral to work for them in something they called *Project Nursery*. Top secret, of course. Doctor Feral almost laughed when they offered “the confidential deal.” He would have accepted the offer without being strong-armed. What an amazing opportunity. Now more than ever, he believes it is his destiny to bring about a new age of superhumans.



The Swarm

It is unclear whether the members of the swarm started out as an ordinary human, an animal mutated through genetic engineering or something completely created in the lab. After the first was engineered, Doctor Feral cloned 12 more. Along the way, some

did not survive the test he put them through. As noted earlier, Feral was trying to create an armored super-soldier with regenerative powers. The low intelligence, rage and power to create Multiple Selves were all accidents.

All members of the Swarm feel a connection to each other, so if one gets captured, the others will come looking for him. Highly aggressive and easily provoked to begin with, members of the Swarm go into a *battle rage* whenever combat lasts more than a minute, they all feel threatened, are imprisoned (the prison better be designed to hold them), or one or more of them is severely injured or subjected to torture or killed. Their low intelligence and hyper-aggressive nature makes it difficult to reason with these creatures even when not enraged. They enjoy fighting and destruction, so if they fall under the influence of a bad guy who can wrangle them, look out.

The Swarm (9 identical Clones)

Real Name(s): Unknown.

Also Known As: The Greys and the Nine.

Alignment: Anarchist.

Attributes: I.Q. 7, M.E. 7, M.A. 7, P.S. 28, P.P. 14, P.E. 21, P.B. 7, and Spd 44 (30 mph/48 km). As clones, each of the Nine have identical stats.

Armor: Natural, see below.

Age: Unknown. Uneducated and aggressive.

Height: 6 feet (1.8 m). **Weight:** 260 pounds (117 kg).

Hit Points: 31 each. **S.D.C.:** 250 each (see Rhino Hide).

Disposition: As noted, hyper-aggressive, almost animal-like.

Work and function together like a wolf pack. Easily provoked to violence. Speak in short sentences and simple words. They want to be left alone and would love to live in the wild, scavenging and hunting for food.

Experience Level: Second.

Skills or Note: Few. Camouflage 80%, Climbing 80%, Escape Artist 70%, Land Navigation 90%, Running, and Swimming 70%, and know how to work simple household devices, including a cell phone, telephone, television, lights, flashlight, toaster, microwave, and similar.

Super Abilities:

Battle Rage (Power Unlimited One, page 14) +2 attacks per melee round, +40 to S.D.C., +3 to initiative, +2 to strike, +7 to damage (special for the Swarm), +3 to roll with impact, immune to Horror Factor, and +2 on all saving throws.

Multiple Beings/Selves (modified): Each of the original nine Swarmers can split into nine additional selves in one instant, never more, and never less unless a duplicate has been killed or captured. Multiple Selves are made to fight and escape. When the battle is over or escape is possible, the duplicates vanish back into the Nine. (See HU2, page 282, for more details).

Mutant Rhino Armored Hide (special): Grey color, thick, bullet-resistant hide. Natural A.R. 16 which means only attackers who roll an 17 or higher inflict damage and pain, which could send the Swarm member into a berserker rage. Attacks under 17 between 7-16 on a roll of D20 inflict 10% of the usual damage. Hide has 250 S.D.C. and heals at a rate of 4D6+12 S.D.C. per 24 hour period.

Extraordinary Strength (HU2, page 231).

Supervision: Nightvision (HU2, page 236), but poor day vision (100 feet/30.5 m).

Psionics: None.

Attacks per Melee: The originals: Four. Duplicates: Three.

Bonuses: As per Attributes and Super Abilities. +2 to strike, parry, and dodge, +13 to damage (+7 more to damage when in Battle Rage). Also see Battle Rage bonuses and penalties.

Damage Notes: Punch, kick or head butt does 2D4 damage, bite does 1D4+1 damage, running body block/ram does 2D6 damage plus has a 66% chance of knocking an opponent weighing up to twice as much as the attacker off his feet (victim loses one melee attack). **Note:** All physical attacks, except bite, see cumulative damage bonuses applied. +13 is typical, +20 during Battle Rage.

Vulnerabilities: Not very smart, quick to anger and fight; -3 on all Perception Rolls, and have few skills to speak of.

Favorite Weapons: Tend to use their bare fists, but may pick up and use blunt or blade weapons if available and can be shown how to use simple devices like explosives. During Battle Rage, however, it is all close melee combat.

Equipment and Resources: Minimal, only what the Swarm members can scavenge. The rarely even wear clothing. They scavenge, steal and take what they need by force.

Devil Worm & Hopper

Heroic Mutants created by Doctor Feral

Devil Worm and Hopper are the *failed* creations of **Doctor Feral**. Failed because they don't have a monstrous or villainous bone in their bodies. Well, maybe a small one in Devil Worm.

As products of a twisted genetic experiment and locked away for years, neither one has much real world experience. Only what their keepers have told them, what they have seen and experienced in the lab, and what they have managed to see on television and the Internet, whenever they were available.

Both of these strange mutants love and identify with comic book heroes they have seen in movies, TV shows, and cartoons. Both imagine themselves as good guys, which is why they were still locked away in one of Doc Feral's secret locations when things went terribly wrong with the Swarm. It is also why Devil Worm and Cal try to rescue people, save lives and help any law enforcement and super-beings who may show up on the scene. It should be noted that whether mutants or humans, they are all innocent "people" to these two mutant heroes.

Despite their questionable and inhuman origins, not to mention four years of captivity and mistreatment, both Hopper and Devil Worm are reasonably emotionally well-balanced, positive and friendly individuals. In fact, both are downright cheerful optimists filled with high ideals and a powerful sense of right and wrong. Two noble souls born to be heroes, not villains or monsters.

Cal and Devil Worm are best friends. Each regards the other as a beloved brother and would do anything for him. Having spent their captivity together since their creation, they share very similar likes, ideas, and outlooks. Both are high-minded idealists with a *Saturday-morning-cartoon* sense of justice and how a super-hero should behave. That means they tend to be cavalier, wise-cracking, swashbuckling heroes given to drama, snappy patter and cool one-liners. Half of them stolen. ("Hasta la vista,

baby" "I'll be back." "Cowabunga, dudes." "Heroes assemble." "With great power comes..." you know the drill.)

Of the two, Devil Worm has the more realistic and a bit of a cynical view of people and the world. In a foul mood, he can be a bit sarcastic and rather brutal and threatening in combat. However, he is a fun-loving prankster, and both are jovial most of the time, laughing and being playful even in the thick of battle. When having fun, both can be outrageous goof-balls, mugging for the camera, and being silly like a pair of overly enthusiastic teenage boys. This could have something to do with the fact that they were created in a laboratory and are *only four years old!* Whatever Doc Feral did to accelerate their growth into what everyone presumes is their full grown bodies, is known only by the mad doctor.



Devil Worm Stats

Given Name: Devil Worm. He likes it.

Alignment: Scrupulous.

Attributes: I.Q. 17, M.E. 21, M.A. 20, P.S. 46 (Supernatural), P.P. 16, P.E. 23, P.B. 7, Spd 10 slithering (7 mph/11 km), or fly (180 mph or 288 km).

Armor: Natural, see below.

Age: Four years old; little formal education.

Size: Stands 8.6 feet (9 m) tall when curled like a snake, but is 20 feet (6.1 m) long and has a wingspan of 18 feet (5.5 m).

Weight: 651 pounds (293 kg).

Hit Points: Main Body (includes head and two arms): 290. Tail: 100. Wings: 190 each.

S.D.C. (Main Body): 90 +10 per each additional level of experience.

Disposition: As noted, Devil Worm sees himself as a hero, so he tries to do good, battle evil and fight crime as a vigilante. He is brave and heroic, but he also sees the dark side of people and the world. Friendly and fun loving, right now he really only

trusts his buddy Cal. If something should ever happen to Hopper, Devil Worm's alignment could change and he might start living up to his name. Both he and Cal can benefit from new friends and heroes to mentor and guide them.

Experience Level: Second.

Skills or Note: Few. Basic Electronics 45%, Computer Operation 60%, Climbing 60%, Cook 50%, Hand to Hand: Basic, Land Navigation 40%, Literacy 25%, Swimming 35%, Radio: Basic 45%, and knows how to work simple household devices, including cell phones, telephones, computers, game platforms, television, lights, flashlights, oven, microwave, dishwasher, and similar.

Super Abilities:

Flight: Winged (HU2, page 232; 180 mph/288 km).

Super-Regeneration (Powers Unlimited 3, page 99; wings, tail, eyes, internal organs, all regenerate quickly).

Supernatural Strength (HU2, page 294).

Psionics: I.S.P. 61 and considered a Major Psychic. Empathy (4), Healing Touch (6), Lust for Life (15), See the Invisible (4), Sense Time (2), and Telepathy (4). See HU2, page 298, for complete descriptions.

Attacks per Melee: Four.

Bonuses: Includes Attributes and Super Ability bonuses. +5 to strike and parry, +3 to dodge, +6 to dodge when flying at full speed, +31 to damage, +4 to pull punch, +2 to roll with impact/fall, and +4 to save vs poison and magic.

Damage Notes: Punch, head butt, tail strike and wing strike inflict 4D6 S.D.C. damage on a restrained punch, 1D6x10+31 on a full strength punch, and 2D6x10+31 with a power punch (tail and wings cannot power punch); 4D6 damage from a bite.

Vulnerabilities: Cannot easily conceal his monstrous appearance, is not very worldly nor educated.

Favorite Weapons: Tends to rely on his brute strength, psionics and other powers, but can learn to use weapons and devices.

Equipment and Resources: Minimal, but the more bad guys they take down, the more money, weapons, gear and gadgets he and Hopper are accumulating. As heroes, however, they give a lot away to mutants and people in need.

Hopper

Also known by the name Cal Fera

At the moment, Hopper is his unofficial hero name. Cal does not have an "official" or permanent heroic name, yet. He has considered Hopper, Leaping-Larry (that was Devil Worm's idea), the Mighty Grasshopper-Man (also Devil Worm's idea), Green Justice, Green Fury, Locust, Steel Locust (because his armor is as hard as steel) and Green Steel, but none of them quite resonate with him. Back at the lab, he is used to being just Cal. "Hopper" popped into his head when people and the police started asking questions. Like it or not, Hopper is the name the media has run with and is the name the police have on file.

Cal is a noble hero, through and through. He may mock, tease, lecture and trick villains, but he is as trustworthy and valiant as they come. A swashbuckling boy scout with a penchant for snappy patter and cracking wise, he is as kind and merciful as he is flamboyant and charismatic. When feeling confident (too often, overconfident), he likes to toy with adversaries and embarrass them by showing off and playing tricks on them. This, of course, can get the playful, overconfident hero into trouble. Sometimes,

big trouble, especially when he is dealing with super beings, not ordinary humans. So far, Hopper has been fortunate enough to find a way out of trouble when it finds him, or gets help from his powerful buddy, Devil Worm. But sometimes their antics let the villains escape or put innocent lives at risk. It is surprising, but it is when innocent lives are at stake that the pair step it up and are at their best. They always put the safety of others before themselves or their silly games. Both are brave, compassionate and merciful, and Hopper, in particular, takes time to comfort people who are scared, hurt or in shock. The personalities and abilities of the two strange mutants complement each other and they make an excellent, if bizarre hero team.

Hopper and Devil Worm are Doctor Feral's early ventures into melding insect genetic codes with animals (and people?) to create sentient beings.

Hopper Stats

Given Name: Cal Fera; named by Doctor Feral because grasshoppers are the suborder *Caelifera*.

Alignment: Principled.

Attributes: I.Q. 15, M.E. 14, M.A. 23, P.S. 21, P.P. 24, P.E. 19, P.B. 10, Spd 22 running (15 mph/24 km), 70 running and leaping (50 mph/80 m), or flying 55 mph (88 km).

Level of Experience: 2nd level.

Armor: Natural, see below.

Age: Four years old; little formal education.

Size: Stands 7 feet (2.1 m) tall and has a wingspan of 10 feet (3 m). **Weight:** 251 pounds (113 kg).



Hit Points: 51 (+10 per level of experience via exoskeleton).

S.D.C. (Exoskeleton): 230. Wings: 120 each.

Disposition: A paladin in a bug's green, shining armor, Hopper is a true hero who strives to be the bravest, kindest and best of the best. He is courageous and compassionate, and always ready to help somebody in trouble. A swashbuckling wise-cracker with a sunny disposition. He always tries to see the best in people and looks for the silver lining in every situation. He is the kind of hero who would not hesitate leaping into a burning building or in front of a bullet to save someone. Hopper is a vegetarian and loves fruits and vegetables, but can also eat leaves and grass to sustain himself. He tried pizza because of the Ninja Turtles but didn't like it. Never eats meat. Loves animals, children and gardens.

Experience Level: Second.

Skills or Note: Few. Art 45%, Basic Electronics 45%, Computer Operation 70%, Climbing 60%, Cook 50%, Hand to Hand: Martial Arts, Land Navigation 35%, Literacy 50%, Identify Plants and Fruits 65%, Swimming 40%, Radio: Basic 45%, Writing 35%, and knows how to work simple household devices, including cell phones, telephones, computers, game platforms, television, lights, flashlight, oven, microwave, and similar.

Super Abilities:

Adhesion (HU2, page 228; can climb walls like a bug).

Antenna (Powers Unlimited One, page 13; keen sense of smell and hearing, motion detection, feelers, etc.).

Armor: Insect: A natural body armor; new, see below.

Flight: Insect: New, see details below.

Superhuman Leaping: New, see details below. Genetically mutated from a grasshopper and Doc Feral only knows what, Cal has powerful legs for hopping, dodging and leaping. He can also use his wings to fly and to glide when he leaps up into the air or from great heights.

Psionics: None.

Attacks per Melee: Five.

Bonuses: Includes Attributes and Super Ability bonuses. +1 on initiative, +8 to strike and parry, +9 to dodge, +2 to disarm, +6 to damage, +4 to pull punch, +6 to roll with impact/fall, +2 to save vs poison and magic.

Damage Notes: Punch and head butt strike inflict 1D4 damage on a restrained punch/butt, 1D6+6 on a full strength punch, 2D6+6 damage on a power punch but it counts as two attacks, 2D4+6 damage on a kick attack, 2D6+18 with a *leap kick*, and 1D6 damage from a bite.

Vulnerabilities: Cannot easily conceal his inhuman nature. Hopper also tends to be too trusting, innocent and naive. He is not very worldly or educated and his compassion and concern for others may be used against him by evildoers.

Favorite Weapons: Cal tends to rely on his speed, leaping, kick attacks, flight, and other powers. He does not like guns or knives, but may use them (without training) when necessary. He can learn to use weapons and devices and would like to learn how to drive a car and motor boats.

Equipment and Resources: Minimal, but the more bad guys they take down, the more money, weapons, gear and gadgets he and Devil Worm are accumulating. As heroes, however, they give a lot away to mutants and people in need. Hopper is especially giving and generous.

New Super Abilities

Armor: Insect Exoskeleton (New Minor Super Ability): A.R. 17. Any rolls to strike that are 16 or less do no damage. Strike rolls 18 and higher do full damage to the S.D.C. of the Exoskeleton Armor. S.D.C.: P.E. attribute number x10 +40. Add an additional 10 Hit Points per each level of experience.

This is a type of natural, living armor, but unlike the Bio-Armor ability which can be made to appear and disappear at will, it is a chitinous exoskeleton like that of an insect and a permanent part of the character. On the positive, it makes the super being resistant to cold, heat and fire (half damage), and he is always protected as if his skin were a suit of living power armor. This makes the hero tough in combat and always ready for action. Perhaps best of all, damage to the insect armor "heals" at a rate of one S.D.C. per minute or 60 S.D.C. per hour!

On the negative, the exoskeleton makes it impossible to disguise oneself to be able to completely blend in with humans. Bulky clothing, overcoats, and a cap, hat, or a motorcycle helmet can conceal his true appearance to walk on the street without being obvious, but he can never look human. **Hopper Character Note:** This does not bother Cal, who is an eternally optimistic individual. He knows he is not human and has no problem with that. He is a bit confused by people, including some super beings who fear him or cannot seem to accept him because of his appearance. Those who call him a freak or a monster are the ones who confuse him most.

Flight: Insect (New Minor Super Ability): Insect Flight is relatively slow compared to other super beings – 50 mph (80 km) +5 mph (8 km) per each additional level of experience. Increase speed by 50% when flying with the wind, reduce by 20% when flying against the wind. Maximum altitude for Insect Flight is 2,000 feet (610 m), but he can hover stationary and can leap out of an aircraft at any altitude below suborbital, like a sky diver, popping the wings open when desired (as low as 80 feet/24.4 m)! **Hopper Character Note:** Cal uses his wings mainly to leap longer distances (up to 1,000 feet/305 m), attain height by leaping into the air and gliding silently on wind currents as well as to land softly on the ground exactly at the location desired.

Leaping (New Minor Super Ability):

+1 to P.P. attribute.

+2 to dodge.

+1 to roll with impact.

1D6 damage to leap kicks.

Leaping Distance: 2 feet (0.6 m) per P.S. attribute point. Increase by 50% with a running start. Double distance of the leap when running at or near full speed.

Superhuman Leaping (New Major Super Ability):

+1 attack per melee round.

+4 to automatic dodge (the act of dodging does not use up a melee action).

+2 to pull punch/kick damage and +2 to roll with impact.

+12 damage to leap kicks.

Leaping Distance: 10 feet (3 m) per P.S. attribute point. Increase by 50% with a running start! Double distance of the leap when running at or near full speed.

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